English as a Lingua Franca:
The case for ELF as an independent, natural and legitimate lingua franca.

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Introduction

Language can be one of the most revealing aspects of the people that speak it: if we look closely enough at the language we use, we can read our history, our culture, our way of thinking and our way of life. From single items of vocabulary, such as loan-words and cognates, as well as from underlying syntax structure and linguistic parameters, we can often get a hint of a history of invasion and colonialism, or maybe of prolonged trade and contact with other bordering cultures. In today's world, interconnected across continents by wires in the ground and waves in the air, where a global culture has already been boiling and brooding for almost a century, the fact that we need and, indeed, use, a global language should come as a surprise to no one.

English has emerged as a global lingua franca only in the second half of the twentieth century, although the gears that would increase its chance of success had already been in motion for a couple of hundred years. In the aftermath of World War II, thanks chiefly to the strong influence of American and British culture, the English language made its way into the lives of the people of Europe and Asia, and became the language of choice for the international institutions that would set the course of post-war Europe. This resulted in the
creation of the third of Kachru's Circles\textsuperscript{1}, the Expanding Circle – that of countries where English has no special administrative status, but is nonetheless learnt and used for international communication.

Today, non-native speakers greatly outnumber native speakers of English, in a 4:1 ratio (Crystal 2012). This means that the majority of interactions through the medium of English happen between non-native speakers, where English is used as a working language, an indispensable tool for international communication between interactants who share neither a common tongue nor a common culture (Firth 1996, in Seidlhofer 2004). Some people welcome this phenomenon, while others deplore it, but it is simply a fact that, today, English truly serves as a global lingua franca.

\textsuperscript{1} The Three-Circle Model of World Englishes was developed by Kachru in 1985 and is one of the most influential models of World Englishes. In this model, the spread of the English language is represented by three concentric circles. The Inner Circle is composed of those countries where English is a first language: the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Ireland, Canada and South Africa, along with some Caribbean regions. The Outer Circle is made up of those countries that have been colonised by those of the Inner Circle, where English is not the native tongue but nonetheless has a special status; this circle includes India, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines and many others. The Expanding Circle relates to all the countries where English has no historical or governmental role, but is widely used as a means for international communication; this includes, essentially, all the countries not included in the other two circles.
What Is a Lingua Franca?

Before even addressing the role of English as a lingua franca, one needs to understand exactly what a lingua franca is and what role it is expected to fulfil. Furthermore, in order to correctly gauge the impact of English today in comparison to lingua francas of the past, one needs to take a look at which languages have claimed that title over the centuries, and what degree of success they attained as lingua francas. Finally, this first chapter will try to provide a clearer understanding of what kind of language can constitute a lingua franca, by providing a possible classification; it will then be possible to understand where English fits in the grand framework of lingua francas.

1.1 Definition

“Lingua franca” is a term that most people take for granted: they may have a vague idea of its meaning, something along the lines of “a widely spoken language, used by people from different countries to communicate with each other”. This is not as far from the target as
it could be, but it is not a satisfactory definition by any means. The most widely accepted definition for “lingua franca” is:

“a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them” (UNESCO 1953, p. 46).

One could ask, why is this the most widely accepted definition? Many other perfectly good definitions exist:

“any language that is widely used as a means of communication among speakers of other languages” (Dictionary.com)

“a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different” (Oxford Dictionary)

“a language used for communication between groups of people who speak different languages” (Cambridge Dictionary)

“a medium of communication between peoples of different languages” (TheFreeDictionary.com)

“a language or mixture of languages used as a medium of communication by people whose native languages are different” (Grammar.about.com)

“language used as a means of communication between populations speaking vernaculars that are not mutually intelligible” (Encyclopedia Britannica)

By analysing these definitions, it is possible to identify some of the key aspects of lingua francas – aspects that we may or may not
also find in the definition provided by UNESCO:

a) Many of the definitions cited above refer to groups of people, or peoples (meaning “populations”), as opposed to single individuals who carry out a conversation in a language that is common to them. A lingua franca, therefore, is defined as being widely and systematically used.

b) A lingua franca is often defined as a medium for communication, a means to an end, a tool with a purpose.

c) Lingua francas are used to communicate across language barriers, by people with different native languages.

The definition given by UNESCO does indeed appear to address many, if not all, of these key points. Perhaps surprisingly, a case could be made for the definition found on Wikipedia being equally valid:

“A lingua franca is a language or a dialect systematically (as opposed to occasionally, or casually) used to make communication possible between persons not sharing a native language or a dialect.”

The presence of the adverb systematically, with the subsequent clarification, seems in particular to be an interesting and important addition to the previous definitions. A lingua franca is indeed a linguistic reality that is actualized in a systematic way in different contexts. Moreover, it is worth pointing out the recognition of dialects, both as lingua francas and as native languages: this is a possibility that may not be immediately realized by many, especially by laymen.
1.2 Historical background and origin of the term

While examples of a common language used as an instrument for communication between different people can be found dating back through the centuries (Akkadian, Aramaic, Greek and Latin, for example), it was only with the Crusades at the end of the 11th century that the term “lingua franca” was first used to categorize these languages (Phillipson 2008).

In the year 1091 AD, Pope Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade. The objective of the 200-year military campaign that followed was to restore Christian access to the Holy Land, the region between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, considered sacred by the three great monotheistic religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

The Arabs had been expanding their territories well beyond the Arabian Peninsula since the 7th century, after the Islamic prophet Muhammad had unified his people. The Byzantine Empire managed to resist the initial Muslim Conquests, but suffered a significant defeat to the Turks in 1071 at the Battle of Manzikert. Consequences of this defeat included the loss of the fertile, productive coastal area of Anatolia and new competition for land and resources from the Turks migrating from the East.

Hundreds of thousands of Roman Catholic Christians became crusaders, vowing to wage war in the name of their God, and receiving plenary indulgences from the Church. This military force
was composed of all sorts of people, coming from many parts of Western Europe. There were priests and soldiers, of course, but also merchants and blacksmiths, porters and pageboys (Samarin 1968). Despite being the official language of religion, Latin was a luxury that only the learned could afford; most of those who took part in the Crusades were not capable of speaking Latin, and while there may have been a few people who knew at least two languages, the great majority could only communicate in a single dialect and probably had trouble understanding even other dialects from their own language. This is the natural environment for the emergence of a lingua franca, an indispensable tool for communication between linguistically diverse people that have a practical need for such a language (Samarin 1968).

Some scholars believe that the term “lingua franca” (literally “French language”) arose when the Provençal language, spoken along the southern shores of Europe between Marseilles and Genoa and well known to the native and foreign merchants and sailors that used to conduct their business in these rich ports, became the basis of a language used among the Crusaders and with the non-French-speaking peoples who had learned it (Samarin 1968). Other scholars trace the origin of the term to how the speakers of Arabic referred to the language of Franks (lisan alfiranj), who were erroneously assumed to represent all Western Europeans; according to this account, this language was also derived from a vernacular Romance tongue, to which many elements from different languages spoken around the Mediterranean Sea were added (Phillipson 2008).

In the light of its unprecedented global status, English is often viewed in comparison to its forerunners, no doubt with the intention of
paying homage both to English and to the ancient language to which it is being compared. Therefore, English is sometimes said to be “the Latin of the new millennium” or “the Latin of our age” (Ostler 2010). A much better comparison, however, would be to call English the new lingua franca: the new language of commerce, of communication among people of different lingua-cultural backgrounds, an indispensable tool for mutual intelligibility, just like the first lingua franca was. Nonetheless, one should be wary that the meaning of the term “lingua franca” needs to be restored, with its historical connotations, lest it become almost meaningless:

“Yet in modern English the term lingua franca is much less likely to be felt as a concrete metaphor than Latin is: it has become a hackneyed, irrelevantly colorful word to mean a language of wider communication, used to bridge language barriers. It was not always this way around. In the High Middle Ages, when even little birds were said to sing “in their own Latin”, Latin was rather the cliché for a universal language, while lingua franca was a striking new turn of phrase”

– (Ostler 2010)

1.3 Classification of lingua francas

Since no more restrictions are placed on what kind of language can be considered a lingua franca other than its function as a tool for international communication, Samarin proposes a classification that should encompass all possible kinds of lingua franca, from pidgins to artificial languages like Esperanto.
a) Natural lingua francas

A natural language is any language that is the mother tongue of some people, evolved through the natural processes of linguistic change and language contact. When a natural language is acquired as a second language by many different people, it is considered a lingua franca because it enables them to communicate with each other effectively, though at a cost: often, the natural language loses some of its vocabulary, or finds its grammar or phonology simplified. When such modifications to the structure of the language become too drastic, the language is said to be pidginized, and to belong to another category of lingua franca.

Before the advent of English, three natural lingual francas played an important role in the history of western civilization: Greek (also called Koiné), Latin and, later, French (Samarin 1968). From 300 BC to 500 AD, Greek unified the learned people of the known world (which for a long time did not extend much beyond the Mediterranean Sea) by serving as a lingua franca at all levels of society. The success of Koiné was due, in part, to the great prestige of the Greek culture and city states, but mostly to the military campaigns of Alexander the Great, who pushed to the East the borders of its Empire. One would expect that, with the demise of Alexander's empire, Koiné would soon make room for other contestants for the role of lingua franca, yet even several centuries after the Romans had consolidated their political hegemony over Europe, Greek was still used by merchants and scholars. Indeed, it was recently discovered that even common people used the lingua franca (though in an unsophisticated way) for their
everyday affairs. In addition, Greek was still used by Egyptians, Persians and Arabs alike. Greek contributed to the spread of Christianity, and it was the language of the Church for all practical purposes until the fall of Roman Empire (Samarin 1968).

It was only when the Roman Church arose from the ashes of the Roman civilization that Latin became a lingua franca and displaced Greek. The clergy learned and used Latin, and political leaders encouraged its learning. Until the 16th century, “all deeds and documents worthy of preservation were in Latin” (Samarin 1968)

With the Renaissance however, Latin began to lose its charm in favour of the vernaculars of the western political and artistic scene. It was in the 18th century that French became the new lingua franca of the west, less linked to the common people than Koiné had been and less linked to political or religious authority than Latin. Its strength originated from the influence of French literature of the time; unfortunately this was a meal of which only the learned minority would partake (Samarin 1968).

b) Pidginized lingua francas

A common feature in the development of lingua francas is that they undergo several linguistic changes, originating both from linguistic interference by mother tongues of those who speak the lingua franca as a second language and from the particular purpose of lingua francas which is highly transactional and focused on efficiency and practicality rather than form. The majority of these structural and grammatical changes can be traced back and grouped under the banner of simplification, a linguistic process that eliminates redundancy and
ambiguity as far as possible. When a lingua franca undergoes changes that severely alter its structure and form, it is said to be “pidginized”.

Pidgin languages are born when, in situations of linguistic and cultural contact, a dominant language exists. The language(s), the transmission of which is stifled or negated, often manage to resurface as lexical items. Pidgins have no native speakers, but are learnt from a second language acquisition perspective with intermittent access to native speech for the various languages composing the pidgin. This is what happened during Colonial times, as the African slaves forcefully imported to the Caribbean by European masters had no choice but to learn their masters' native languages, such as English, Spanish or French. The resulting forms of speech were not at all a random mixture of linguistic elements from the European language spoken by the wealthy and the powerful and the African language or dialect of the subservient parts of the population; nor were they merely an inferior version of the European language distorted by linguistic white-noise from the non-native speakers' mother tongues. On the contrary, they were, in fact, languages displaying genuine linguistic structure and regularity; these languages became the lingua franca of all those who suddenly had to coexist and communicate despite being native speakers of different natural languages.

The peculiarity of pidgins as lingua francas is the fact that there are no native speakers, until the next stage in language evolution: when a pidgin is passed on to the next generation, it is finally acquired as a native language, and it is said to become a creole (Samarin 1968). This does not invalidate the pidgin (now a creole) from serving as a lingua franca but, in the light of the fact that it now has native speakers, it could be considered a natural lingua franca.
rather than a pidginized one.

Some examples of documented pidgins include Chinese, Hawaiian and Jamaican English-based pidgins; Caribbean French-based pidgins; and African Portuguese-based pidgins. While there are myriad examples from all over the world, one should not overlook the fact that the majority of pidgins are based on some Indo-European language, especially the languages of those cultures that took part in the marine exploration of the world during the centuries generally referred to as Colonization (Samarin 1968).

c) Planned lingua francas

Since the end of the 19th century, there have been several attempts to create international lingua francas that could serve humanity even better than naturally occurring languages. Examples include Esperanto, Novial, Ido, Frater and three separate homonymous languages called, simply, Interlingua.

The purported strengths of these languages arise from the fact that they try to mimic the most successful aspects of natural lingua francas, such as lexical syncretism and reduction of redundancy; however, it is difficult to find objective studies regarding the inherent value of these products as efficient tools for intercultural communication because the issue is clouded by prejudice both for and against them (Samarin 1968).

One has to wonder why what, on paper, looks like the best tool for the job that science could develop, does not, find widespread use and success in practice. It is my opinion that the fact that these planned languages Firstly have practically no native speakers, and
secondly come without even the tiniest cultural background, makes them unappealing and too “artificial” for the potential user. Language appears to work best when it is free from constraints and ideological obstacles and when it is allowed to take advantage of its “liquid” state. Language adapts to the container, fills the gaps that need to be filled and moves linguistic resources from a place where there is redundancy to one where there is scarcity. Planned languages, as opposed to their naturally occurring counterparts, behave like a masterfully crafted block of ice, perfect for one context, but unable to adapt to other contexts in different places and times.

A good example of a never-fully-realized project for a planned lingua franca is provided by Esperanto. With over two million fluent speakers worldwide, perhaps including as many as 2000 native speakers, Esperanto is the most popular artificial language in the world. The name comes from the pseudonym Doktoro Esperanto (meaning “one who hopes”) used by physician and linguist L.L. Zamenhof when he published the first description of Esperanto, Unua Libro, in 1887. His declared objective was to create a language that would be easy to learn and that could serve the whole human population equally, without any political or ideological implications, fostering peace and understanding between people from different socio-cultural extractions. Esperanto was recognized by UNESCO in 1954, and is even the official language of instruction of the International Academy of Sciences in San Marino.

Despite these accomplishments, Esperanto does, indeed, fall short of the expectations set for it by its inventor, L.L. Zamenhof, and its proponents. Over a century after its introduction, Esperanto has not even come close to its goal of becoming the global lingua franca, the
universal second language that would connect the whole world. On the one hand, Esperanto suffers from its lack of a native culture, on the other it presents itself loaded with vocabulary and semantics derived from various European languages, providing an unintended Euro-centric world view. Furthermore, Esperanto has too large a vocabulary. Many items that could be simplified and substituted for the ease of European learners, display non-European roots, making it harder to learn than it should be for Europeans, and adding next to nothing in favour of non-European learners. To make matters worse, despite the intent to make Esperanto as easy and logical as possible, its grammar, its vocabulary and even its orthography make it appear too distant from the European languages from which it is mainly derived.

Ultimately, Esperanto looks and sounds unnatural. Ludwig von Wittgenstein expressed in harsh words his opinion of this language:

“Esperanto. The feeling of disgust we get if we utter an invented word with invented derivative syllables. The word is cold, lacking in associations, and yet it plays at being 'language'. A system of purely written signs would not disgust us so much.”

– (Wittgenstein 1946\(^2\))

1.4 Synthesis

To sum up, a lingua franca can be any language used on a regular basis in order to allow communication between people who do not speak the same native languages. The origin of the term *lingua*

franca dates back to the Crusades, in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, when a language derived from many European dialects was put to efficient use by all Europeans to communicate with their own comrades and with the indigenous populations of the Middle East. Numerous languages have served as lingua francas since then, and more than once linguists have taken it upon themselves to try to devise an artificial tongue for international communication. However, so far, all these attempts have failed, while natural and pidginized lingua francas have dominated the scene.
The emergence of English as a Lingua Franca

A language does not rise to global status in a fortnight, or by sheer accident. On the contrary, English came to be the world's lingua franca for a variety of reasons that range from the historical and geographical (the foundation of empires that stretched throughout the world), through the political and the economic (the strong influence of the United States on global affairs and policies), to the socio-cultural, with the massive impact of Anglo-American culture on all facets of modern life, from art to technology.

Some scholars seem to have a welcoming attitude, seeing English as a global lingua franca that could serve humanity as an unrivalled tool for mutual understanding in the face spatial distance and cultural diversity. Others, however, show deep concern for a possible new form of colonialism perpetrated through the English language that could lead to language death, dominion loss and forced cultural homogeneity.

This second chapter aims to explore how English has become the new lingua franca and what this new reality entails, in terms of globalisation and international relationships.
1.2 How did English become the new lingua franca?

David Crystal is among those who are enthusiastic about English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), as he himself writes:

"I believe in the fundamental value of a common language, as an amazing world resource which presents us with unprecedented possibilities for mutual understanding, and thus enables us to find fresh opportunities for international cooperation. In my ideal world, everyone would have fluent command of a single world language. I am already in the fortunate position of being a fluent user of the language which is most in contention for this role and have cause to reflect every day on the benefits of having it at my disposal."

– (Crystal 1997: x)

Crystal believes the reasons for the emergence of world English have nothing to do with the language itself, but with socio-economic and cultural factors alone, all related to the power of the people who speak it. He dismisses the idea that there are specific aspects of the linguistic structure of the English language, of its grammar system or even its vocabulary that would make it easier to learn, thus favouring its adoption as a global language. He articulates his argument by providing a detailed overview of those factors, which are briefly summarised in the following paragraphs.

To begin with, Crystal gives a historical account of how the English language has spread throughout the globe, from the British Isles to every single continent, highlighting the role of the political,
economic and technological power held by either the UK or the USA (or both) during pivotal moments in history:

a) The British Empire distributed English to its colonies all around the world.
b) Since the creation of the League of Nations, English has played an official or working role in the majority of international political institutions.
c) During the Industrial Revolution, learning about the new technologies meant having to learn English.
d) Later, in the 20th century, London and New York became the economic capitals of the world.

In addition, Crystal points to the prominent role of English in virtually every aspect of modern society, leading to a consolidation of its position, sometimes at the expense of other cultures. He mainly focuses on the media which, as a consequence of the phenomenon known as globalisation, have the potential to shape and form society quickly and with profound effects:

a) In the 17th century, newspapers and gazettes started circulating in Britain; their American counterparts came soon after, and it was in the US that a truly independent press was developed in the 19th century, thanks to new technology for printing and delivering the finished products to a great audience.
b) In the 19th century, American publishers were the first to capitalize on advertising in order to lower the prices of their magazines and therefore greatly increase their distribution;
moreover, advertising became the most prominent feature of American capitalism, thus strengthening America’s economy and making English the language of the global market.

c) The first public radio broadcasting started in 1920 in Pennsylvania, USA; shortly afterwards, in 1922, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) was established in the UK. Following the development of this new technology, broadcasting through the medium of the English language began to spread to other countries. The next step was the invention of television, which slowly replaced radio almost completely.

d) After the First World War, the American film industry superseded its European equivalent, and Hollywood became a reality in 1915. As a result, when sound was implemented in the late 1920s, the default language of cinema was English.

e) The development of the recording industry in the 20th century happened almost exclusively in the USA, from the gramophone to the magnetic tape to LP discs; the popular music scene became dominated by the English language, and it has not changed since then.

Crystal finally addresses a few other facets of modern life, beside the media industry, that could have influenced English’s chances of success as a global lingua franca. He stresses the role of:

• "International travel and safety" policies, citing the examples of Seaspeak and Airspeak, specialized varieties of English necessary to ensure clear, effective, non-ambiguous
communication in contexts of emergency or of great responsibility;
• education policies, as learning English became indispensable to access the great deal of knowledge written in English, especially after the invention of the internet;
• communication services, noting how the postal and telephone systems, and of course the internet, were all created in the Anglo-American world.

Crystal is quite adamant in thinking that these socio-cultural, political and historical reasons are the only ones to be credited for the emergence of ELF. He readily dismisses any hypothesis regarding a supposed inherent simplicity and aptitude of the English language that would increase its appeal as the chosen language for international communication. Among these features, Crystal mentions, of course, English's weak morphological system, the absence of grammatical gender, and the simplicity of grammatical construction.

Crystal's rebuttal takes the form of a comparison with Latin and French, which both served as lingua francas in the past despite having a strong morphology, and a mention of English’s syntactic, lexical and stylistic complexity.

He states:

“Latin was once a major international language, despite its many inflectional endings and gender differences. French, too, has been such a language, despite its nouns being masculine or feminine; and so – at different times and places – have the heavily inflected Greek, Arabic, Spanish and Russian. Ease of learning has nothing to do with it. Children of all cultures learn to talk over more or less the
same period of time, regardless of the differences in the grammar of their languages.”

– (Crystal 1997: 6)

While he does not deny that there exist specific linguistic features that may indeed make a particular language more appealing for international usage, Crystal believes in the superior importance of the socio-cultural factors described above.

Furthermore, he argues that there are as many linguistic factors against English as a global language as there are in favour of it. Learners have commented on a perceived “familiarity” of vocabulary in the English language, spurring no doubt from the extensive borrowing from English over the centuries from other languages and cultures. On top of that, there is no denying the perceived “democracy” of a language with no system of coding social class differences (as occurs in other languages, e.g. Javanese). Despite this, Crystal denounces those peculiar linguistic features that one would expect would make English so much less appealing on the international stage – in particular, the strong irregularity of its spelling system, with no clear and univocal correspondence between graphemes and phonemes.

While the importance of Crystal's socio-cultural reasons has to be recognized, there is still ground to posit whether he might have been too hasty, too strong in dismissing those inherent qualities of the English language. One could want to reconsider whether the notion that some intrinsic factors could not only greatly increase a language's chances of becoming a global language, but also affect the efficacy of that language once it is adopted as a lingua franca and its stability in
the long run could have some validity.

First of all, Crystal's comparison with Latin and French seems to not be quite enough to disregard any possible correlation between a simple morphology and the success of a lingua franca: one could at best argue that a simple, poor morphological system is not a *conditio sine qua non*, but this comparison with ancient languages does not go further than that and certainly does not preclude the possibility that such linguistic features can have a massive impact on the rate of spread and the degree of success of a lingua franca.

On the basis that the socio-cultural conditions under which those two languages were 'adopted' as lingua francas in the past are completely different from those that reign over the spread of ELF today, it is safe to argue that the comparison may be unwarranted. In the past, these languages were used mainly among the rich and the powerful, who would travel and cross borders, while the common people would rarely travel more than a few miles from their home. On top of that, the powers at play practically made first Latin and then French an obligatory choice: something radically different from what we see in the spread of English today, a democratic process in which most people reach for English independently. Crystal himself seems to acknowledge the uniqueness of the ELF phenomenon among all others instances of lingua francas when he says:

“There are no precedents in human history for what happens to languages, in such circumstances of rapid change. There has never been a time when so many nations were needing to talk to each other so much. There has never been a time when so many people wished to travel to so many places. There has never been such a strain placed on the
conventional resources of translating and interpreting. Never has the need for more widespread bilingualism been greater, to ease the burden placed on the professional few. And never has there been a more urgent need for a global language”.

– (Crystal 1997: 12)

Furthermore, there is at least one counter-example of a (regional) lingua franca chosen not only for political reasons, but also for its inherent simplicity: Malay was chosen in Indonesia as a lingua franca because it was spoken only by a minority, and therefore was not considered a 'threat', but also because the strict correspondence between phoneme and grapheme made it easy to learn. The adoption of Malay as a lingua franca has been extremely successful, with 35% of the Indonesian population describing themselves as first language speakers and the majority of the population reported as being able to speak it (Kirkpatrick 2010). It is interesting that the one element that is responsible for the interpretation of the Malay language as 'easy' is also, arguably, the single most 'damaging' linguistic feature of the English language in terms of its appeal as a lingua franca: that is, again, the fact that in English there is no clear correspondence between sound and written form.

While the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca is different from Malay, in that the latter has been elected as a lingua franca after thoughtful consideration while the former asserted itself without any conscious decision by any international institution governing languages in the world, this juxtaposition can serve to highlight that linguistic features can have an impact, for good or bad, on the success of a lingua franca.
Regarding Crystal's criticism that English may have enough negative (in terms of international appeal) linguistic features to balance out those that may work in favour of its desirability, it could be argued that many of those “negative” elements may not be crucial aspects of ELF communication, and could often be avoided, simplified or regularised in ELF speech, where the focus of the interactants is not to emulate English as a Mother Tongue (EMT), but rather to make themselves understood. In lingua franca contexts, the way English is used shows that these situations are about cooperation and collaboration by all speakers, making the necessary effort so that successful communication can happen.

This means there is indeed a balance of linguistic forces at play in ELF communication. While there is a great deal of shared linguistic common ground among ELF speakers, making communication possible, there is also great deal of local variation and substantial potential for accommodation, as speakers adjust and negotiate their speech for the specific situation at hand. ELF communication is known to bypass whatever syntactic, semantic and stylistic problems may arise, by use of code-switching, repetition, echoing of items that would be condemned as errors in EMT speech, avoidance of local idiomatic language and paraphrasing (Cogo, Dewey 2006 in Jenkins 2009; Kirkpatrick 2008 in Jenkins 2009). Crystal himself provides the example of Euro-English: the English used by members of the European Union institutions, in which non-native speakers superimpose the patterns of their L1 and create an interference; what is even more interesting, however, is that EMT speakers working in Brussels feel as if their own L1 English is being influenced by Foreign Language patterns: these EMT speakers tend to
adopt a syllable-timed rhythm, to make use of simplified sentence constructions, to avoid idioms and colloquial vocabulary, to speak at a slower rate and to use clearer patterns of articulation (i.e. avoiding elisions and assimilations). What is happening is that these EMT speakers are not really using EMT anymore when they speak in Brussels, they are effectively speaking ELF, and they even adopt the same techniques that non-native ELF speakers use in order to avoid those problematic features that could interfere with the interaction. Crystal is not surprised by this fact. He writes:

“That an inevitable consequence of [a global use of English] is that the language will become open to the winds of linguistic change in totally unpredictable ways.”

– (Crystal 1997: 130-131)

2.2 Rejection of English as a lingua franca

Not everyone shares Crystal's enthusiasm for the advent of a global lingua franca; English, in particular, suffers from a “bad reputation”, a consequence of living in a post-colonial world. In several countries, especially if they once belonged to the British Empire, there is a strong rejection of the language of the colonist, while local languages and dialect are supported by specific policies and/or by important figures in those cultures.

On this topic, Crystal (1997: 114) cites the examples of Kenya and of India, focusing the attention on certain public figures that have
a strong opinion on the subject of “linguistic imperialism”, and decided to denounce it or even reject English, such as Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who uses only Gikuyu and Kishwaili as medium of expression for his artistic works of literature.

“The basis of any independent government is a national language, and we can no longer continue aping our former colonizers.”
- (J.Kenyatta, former president of Kenya 1974)

“I am lamenting a neo-colonial situation which has meant the European bourgeoisie once again stealing our talents and geniuses as they have stolen our economies. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Europe stole art treasures from Africa to decorate their houses and museums; in the twentieth century Europe is stealing the treasures of the mind to enrich their languages and cultures. Africa needs back its economy, its politics, its culture, its languages and all its patriotic writers.”
- (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986)

“To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them … Is it not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium; that, when I became a Barrister, I may not speak my mother-tongue, and that someone else should have to translate to me from my own language? Is this not absolutely absurd? Is it not a sign of slavery?”
- (Ghandi, 1908)

These arguments are all related to the issue of language as one of the chief means of expressing one's own identity. Identity will be addressed in a later chapter. However, it is important to know that
there is great evidence pointing to how, today, ELF is not imposing itself as a colonial language, substituting local dialects or national languages; rather, ELF is being adopted almost unconsciously all over the world as a useful second language, and is met with generally positive attitude.

The testimonies presented above prove that not everyone is ready or willing to embrace English as a medium of international communication; however, it is important to note that these testimonies come from people who live in a post-colonial reality, and it may be that there is some level of prejudice regarding the language of the former colonists. Therefore it would be interesting to read another account against ELF, possibly from a European source.

In stark contrast with Crystal's welcoming attitude towards English as a global lingua franca, R. Phillipson (2008) argues that this reality is imposing itself on the international linguistic scene, displacing other languages and contributing to some form of linguistic imperialism.

Phillipson's idea is that one should not overlook that English, even when used at an international level as a lingua franca, is really also serving many “special purposes” in several of society's key domains. He would rather define English as a *lingua economica, lingua emotiva, lingua academica, lingua cultura*, or even as a *lingua bellica* or as a *lingua americana*, depending on the specific context in which it is used and on the specific domain it is influencing. He argues that using a neutral term like “lingua franca” may hide the fact that not every English speaker is put on the same level and that there may be ideological perils lurking beneath the façade of English as a democratic tool belonging to everyone that speaks it:
“Labelling English as a *lingua franca*, if this is understood as a culturally neutral medium that puts everyone on an equal footing, does not merely entail ideological dangers – it is simply false.”

- (Phillipson 2008: 250)

As an example, one is once again presented with the case of how English was perceived in India and in many former colonies. The indigenous population of non-native English speakers suffered from a severe inferiority complex regarding English, seeing it as nothing short of a *lingua divina*: a language of the elite, that functioned as an invisible barrier for social inclusion and exclusion. At this point in his paper, Phillipson states that “language can serve good or evil purposes”, and that his main focus is to consider which agents have interests in favouring or limiting the spread of English and for what purposes, despite of the fact that “English tends to be marketed as though it serves exclusively laudable purposes”.

Soon, however, Phillipson's argument becomes more and more critical of English, of globalisation, and of US and EU linguistic policies, without seeming to consider the possibility that there may be a good side to what he perceives as such a terrible phenomenon (Phillipson 2008).

As a result, in a matter of a few lines, English manages to deserve the not so enviable titles of: *lingua frankensteinia*, probably because of its potential for creating 'monstruos' situations, like those in India and in the ex-colonies; *lingua tyrannosaura* (though he is actually citing what another scholar, Swales, wrote in 1996), suggesting that English behaves like a fierce, unstoppable and cunning
predator of other languages; *lingua cucula*, a language with a hidden agenda to supplant and marginalize other languages, sometimes slowly taking over certain domains like it is happening in Scandinavia; and finally, a *lingua diabolica*, twisting his previous example of *lingua divina*: English is a “necessary evil” that minorities have no choice but to learn.

Phillipson is not alone in his concerns, and his arguments are supported by a fair amount of evidence and documents, therefore it would be unjust to simply dismiss them as paranoia or mere prejudice.

He shows how the European Union may have formally embraced 23 official languages, but in practice roughly ¾ of EU texts are initially written in English (compare this to 1970, where French was in a similar position with 60% of the texts), and only later are they translated. On top of that, he underlines how “externally the EU has become monolingual”. However, he cites documents and speeches from right-wing, conservative political leaders, influenced by religious belief systems that they think entitles them in some way (like the Bush Jr. administration in the US) or left-wing, supposedly progressive politicians (Tony Blair in the UK) that nevertheless ended up joining forces with the aforementioned American administration, so this puts their loyalties into question in some respects (while he declared himself as a social democrat, Tony Blair was described as being “right of centre” by some, for example Neal Lawson, in his article "A decade of Blair has left the Labour party on its knees", which appeared in The Guardian, 19 April 2007).

Phillipson reports (2008: 253-254) how the Cheney-Wolfowitz-Rumsfeld doctrine, under the second Bush administration, stated that
“The plan is for the United States to rule the world. The overt theme is unilateralism, but it is ultimately a story of domination. It calls for the United States to maintain its overwhelming military superiority and prevent new rivals from rising up to challenge it on the world stage. It calls for dominion over friends and enemies alike. It says not that the United States must be more powerful, or most powerful, but that it must be absolutely powerful.”

He then goes on to report the words of Tony Blair in two instances, which seem to echo the ideology presented in aforementioned doctrine.

“Globalisation begets interdependence, and interdependence begets the necessity of a common value system. History . . . the age-old battle between progress and reaction, between those who embrace the modern world and those who reject its existence.”

- (T. Blair, as reported in Foreign Affairs, January/February 2007)

“Century upon century it has been the destiny of Britain to lead other nations. That should not be a destiny that is part of our history. It should be part of our future. We are a leader of nations or nothing.”


Phillipson acknowledges that Tony Blair has been a blind supporter of the US under the Bush administration and that his political vision was, indeed, moved by a colonial idea of progress that
his religion entitled him (and the conservatives in the US) to impose on the rest of the world.

Hardly anyone would expect a non-nationalist view coming from conservatives and their allies: of course, their policies took advantage of English in every way they could to strengthen their international influence, even if it hurt other lingua-cultures. Nonetheless, history and society often move ahead faster than conservatives would like, and ultimately their efforts to exert control over every facet of society are almost invariably negated. By focusing on the policies of conservatives as evidence of English being some sort of insidious device for English speaking countries to move a cultural, ideological invasion against the rest of the world, Phillipson is negating the natural, democratic spread that happens at all levels of society, wherever there is enough connectivity to reach other people all over the world; just like Crystal said, “there can be no superimposed plot with language”.

Phillipson finally criticizes how so many linguists who work on 'global English', 'international English' or 'ELF' without acknowledging the cultural weight of Anglo-American English, allowing EMT to still serve as the cornerstone and provider of rules for English-based global communication; it could be argued, in response to this criticism, that perhaps the issue is not with “English as a lingua franca”, but rather with “English as a mother tongue” used as a lingua franca. This concept is of utmost importance in the study and analysis of ELF, and hopefully it will be possible to decouple to a reasonable degree Anglo-American culture from the English language, in order for ELF to be considered a truly egalitarian, global language that can and will only serve its own purpose: to allow international
communication, not to push political ideologies or cultural hegemony.

2.3 Synthesis

On the whole, the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca tends to have a polarizing effect on scholars and critics. Some, like Crystal, are enthusiastic about it, and see the inherent value of a common language for all the people in the world; others, like Phillipson, are more sceptical and wary about the possibility of English being used as a tool for an ideological colonization that would subjugate other cultures and negate their identity, while reinforcing the predominance of Anglo-American culture. The reasons for the emergence of ELF are diverse and, while they can be defined as mostly socio-cultural or political-economic, it is important to note that there is some evidence that perhaps the inherent structure of the English language could have affected ELF’s chances of success.
The shadow cast by English as a Mother Tongue

Languages and dialects can without a doubt be considered defining aspects of a culture and of a population. When people use a language they are not merely expressing concepts and notions, but also expressing their cultural identity, whether they are speaking their native tongue or a second or foreign language.

Since language is so closely related to the culture of the people that speak it, it is hardly surprising that one of the most common reasons for studying a foreign language has always been an interest in the culture and the people who speak that language as a native tongue. The learner aims mostly at communicating efficiently with the native speakers, maybe living among them one day, and therefore the goal of language learning is to acquire native-like proficiency.

As a consequence, this type of foreign language learning depends on the norms and rules provided by the native speakers, and every deviation is identified as an error to be avoided: the native speakers are considered to be the rightful owners, the masters of their own language, who are graciously lending it to those who want to
participate in their world.

This certainly used to be true of English as well, until the 19th and 20th centuries, when it really became an international language. With such large numbers of non-native speakers around the world using the English language as a medium for their own international business and for other specific purposes, the concept of “ownership of the English language” started to be a topic of heated debate among sociolinguists. With this notion put into question, scholars also re-examined the predominant idea that there is a “proper” way to use the language, and that this “proper” way is to be dictated by the native speakers (especially those from the UK and the US), acting as norm providers for the whole Expanding Circle of English.

Despite the growing number of studies and scholars putting into question the primacy of English as a Mother Tongue compared to English as Lingua Franca, ELF still suffers from severe prejudice and stigma that may be the worst obstacle to its recognition as a legitimate variety of English that does not depend on native standards.

### 3.1 About the ownership of the English language

The unwritten assumption that a language belongs to a specific people, to a specific country (or set of countries) or to a specific culture has dominated the field of sociolinguistics only since relatively recently, and still has a meaningful (and some would say perhaps also negative) impact on English Language Teaching.
Jenkins (2000) argues that while the reality of how English is employed in the world has changed dramatically in the last century, and the motivation that pushes people to learn and use this language on daily basis has similarly shifted monumentally, English Language Teaching has had some trouble keeping up with these changes.

First, she says that English used to be sought for by learners primarily for communication with native speakers and, therefore, the aforementioned assumption that confers ownership of the language on native speakers made absolute sense. Who could best adjudicate the use of the English language, if not those who learnt it at birth in a native speaking context?

"Until fairly recently, the goal of [English Language] teaching was straightforward: learners wished primarily to be able to communicate effectively with native speakers of English, who were considered by all to be the owners of the language, guardians of its standards, and arbiters of acceptable pedagogic norms. (...) In order to achieve their goal, it was considered essential for these 'non-native speakers' to approximate as closely as possible to the native standard, particularly with regard to pronunciation and, in the 20th century, very often with respect to a single prestige accent, Received Pronunciation (RP)."

- (Jenkins 2000: 5)

However, Jenkins soon proceeds to highlight the fact that today English is spoken not only by a vast majority of non-native speakers, outnumbering native speakers 4 to 1 (Crystal 2012), but also between non-native speakers. That is to say, since most of the interactions that take place around the world through the medium of English happen between non-native speakers, the goal of many of those who learn English has probably changed: not everyone aims to
interact with native speakers, but rather with the many other non-native speakers.

“The English language's] most frequent use outside the L1 countries (the 'English as a Native Language', or ENL, countries, like the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australasia) and the ESL countries is between speakers *neither* of whom learnt it as an L1. Thus it differs from other foreign languages such as Spanish, Russian, Japanese, and so on, which continue to be learnt predominantly for communication with their L1 speakers, usually in the L1 country.”

- (Jenkins 2000: 6)

Jenkins is wary of distinguishing between the various ways English is learnt and used, when making her claim. She does not mean to deprive native speakers of their own language, nor to reverse the balance of power by allowing the non-native speakers majority to dictate norms to the native speakers. Rather, she envisages a pluralistic vision of the English language, in which different contexts call for different norms and different concepts of “ownership”.

“No one denies the 'rights' of so-called 'native speakers' to establish their own standards for use in interaction with other 'native speakers' (ENL), and even with 'non-native speakers' (EFL). However, the important question is: who should make such decisions for communication wholly between 'non-native speakers', i.e. for English as an International Language?”

- (Jenkins 2000: 7)

Jenkins is not alone in voicing this kind of argument against an absolute ownership of the English language on part of native speaker communities.
“Not only has 'English' become international in the last half century, but scholarship about English has also become international: the ownership of an interest in English has become international. We are no longer a language community which is associated with a national community or even with a family of nations such as the Commonwealth aspired to be. We are an international community (...)

- (Brumfit 1994: 16)

“How English develops in the world is no business whatever of native speakers in England, the United States, or anywhere else. They have no say in the matter, no right to intervene or pass judgement. They are irrelevant. The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it. To grant such custody of the language, is necessarily to arrest its development and so undermine its international status. It is a matter of considerable pride and satisfaction for native speakers of English that their language is an international means of communication. But the point is that it is only international to the extent that it is not their language. It is not a possession which they lease out to others, while still retaining the freehold. Other people actually own it. As soon as you accept that English serves the communicative and communal needs of different communities, it follows logically that it must be diverse.”

- (Widdowson 1994: 385)

"Indeed, when even the largest English-speaking nation, the USA, turns out to have only about 20 per cent of the world's English speakers, it is plain that no one can now claim sole ownership. This is probably the best way of defining a genuinely global language, in fact: that its usage is not restricted by countries or (as in the case of some artificial languages) by governing bodies."

- (Crystal 1997: 130)
3.2  The relationship between ELF and EMT

ELF is different from EMT in that it is almost exclusively concerned with mutual intelligibility. ELF speakers are mostly concerned with efficiency, relevance and economy in both language learning and language use; they are not concerned with adhering to EMT norms. What Kachru writes seems to be true:

"The unprecedented functional range and social penetration globally acquired by English demands fresh theoretical and descriptive perspectives."

- (Kachru 1996, in Seidhlofer 2000: 57)

On the one hand, in English Language Teaching (ELT) the new attitude regarding the ownership of the language and the concept of “what ought to be taught, and what ought to be corrected” has indeed changed from the quiet acceptance of native-speaker, preferably Inner Circle standards, models and norms, to increased attention placed by teachers on a wider variety of topics, related to language learning. The worth of “non-native speaker” teachers is starting to be recognized, as these teachers have learnt the target language (English) from a foreign language learning perspective, meaning that they share this experience with their and can help them achieve their linguistic goals.

“Whereas language teachers used to be preoccupied mainly with the description and instruction of the language as such, we now find a much wider variety of concerns, with cultural, political, social, ecological, psychological, technological, and managerial issues demanding at least as much attention as the language proper. This has led to a broader conception of the profession, and to a discourse of ELT in which notions of ‘correctness’, ‘norms’, ‘mistakes’
and ‘authority’ seem to have largely given way to an ethos characterized by ‘learner-centredness’, ‘cooperative learning’, ‘awareness’ and ‘reflection’. In the discourse of language planning and education policy, monoculturalism, monolingualism, monomodels and monocentrism have been replaced by multiculturalism, multilingualism, polymodels and pluricentrism. The most important consequence of these developments for so-called non-native teachers of English, who after all constitute the majority of teachers of English worldwide, has probably been that the notion of native speakers’ ‘ownership of English’ has been radically called into question and that a discussion has gathered momentum which highlights the special potential expertise ‘non-native’ teachers have on the grounds that they know the target language as a foreign language, that they share with their students the experience of what it is like to try and make it their own, often through the same first language ‘filter’.”

- (Seidhlofer 2000: 51-52)

However, ELF is only just beginning to be recognized as a proper variety of English, and is still mostly analysed, in studies, literature and academic circles, in comparison with EMT.

EMT appears to be the default referent for the relevant literature and for all research and studies involving English. Linguistic descriptions still focus mainly on how English is spoken as an L1, it is only recently that Outer Circle varieties have been included in the scope of corpuses like the International Corpus of English, and in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), the non-native speakers' performance is always measured against the standard set by native speakers (Seidhlofer 2000). In addition, even among the non-native speakers themselves, there appears to be a strong attachment to
Inner Circle standard models, as there is little acknowledging of Outer Circle Englishes as firmly established varieties, and consistent positive orientation towards 'standard' (which means British and American) accents (Jenkins 2009). Any deviation from 'standard' EMT norms is constantly condemned as 'bad', 'broken' English, and in some cases (as with Euro-English, mentioned above), these non-standard forms have been accused of contaminating the standards of native speakers (Breiteneder 2005).

Nonetheless, these notions clash with the reality of English as a global language today: English is not 'distributed' as a monolithic model of norms and encoded forms. Rather it is 'spread' as a virtual language. Widdowson argues that 'distribution' and 'spread' are antithetical concepts, and that one negates the other:

“... I would argue that English as an international language is not distributed, as a set of established encoded forms, unchanged into different domains of use, but it is spread as a virtual language. ... When we talk about the spread of English, then, it is not that the conventionally coded forms and meanings are transmitted into different environments and different surroundings, and taken up and used by different groups of people. It is not a matter of the actual language being distributed but of the virtual language being spread and in the process being variously actualized. The distribution of the actual language implies adoption and conformity. The spread of the virtual language implies adaptation and nonconformity. The two processes are quite different. And they are likely to be in conflict. Distribution denies spread. So you can think of English as an adopted language, and then you will conceive of it as a stabilized and standardized code leased out on a global scale, and controlled by the
inventors, not entirely unlike the franchise of Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Distribution of essentially the same produce for consumers worldwide.”


Once one adopts the view that English is delivered by the Inner Circle as standardized, copyrighted copies of the same product, what is being denied is the contrary evidence that English is spreading in the world, that different people are making it their own and adapting it to their own realities. EMT is just one reality, and probably not the most pertinent one in lingua franca contexts; the vast majority of ELF communication, in fact, happens between non-native speakers, and in reality it might be that EMT speech is not the most efficient and easy to understand in such situations, since it presents itself loaded with markers of in-group membership, such as characteristic pronunciations, specialized vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, references and allusion to experiences and cultural background that might be shared among EMT speakers, but probably constitute a problem with non-native speakers (Seidlhofer 2000). Ultimately:

"Language is an immensely democratising institution: to have learnt a language is to immediately have rights in it. You may add to it, modify it, play with it, create in it, ignore bits of it, as you will"

- (Crystal 2012: 167).

EMT speakers are therefore being replaced as the sole custodians of the English language, and once-undisputed Inner Circle
norms are being ignored, questioned, and replaced by local varieties (Trudgill 1998, in Rajadurai 2007). Now that the Outer Circle variants have been recognized and granted rights to the English language, the next step would be to grant that same recognition and status to ELF (Seidlhofer 2000).

However, there is bound to be strong resistance to such a development, suggesting that ELF will likely have to face criticism similar to that used against the Outer Circle Englishes, and against older varieties of English before them.

To begin with, there are two major opposing perspectives from which most of the attacks on ELF come. The first perspective pictures ELF as monolithic, monocentric – as a monomodel in which intercultural communication and cultural identity are lost. As we have just seen, however, it could be argued with some degree of confidence that it is actually the Inner Circle models that provide monolithic standards that negate the identity of the Expanding Circle's speakers.

The second perspective suggests that ELF lacks any standard – that it is just interlanguage in which "anything goes" and that, by default, it exhibits errors whenever it departs from Inner Circle models. Again, one could argue that the same thing used to be levelled against Outer Circle varieties, such as Indian English, Singaporean English, that have since been recognized as legitimate variants (Jenkins 2009). Besides:

“There is really no justification for doggedly persisting in referring to an item as ‘an error’ if the vast majority of the world’s L2 English speakers produce and understand it. Instead, it is for L1 speakers to move their own receptive goal posts and adjust their own expectations as far as
international (but not intranational) uses of English are concerned.”

- (Jenkins 2000: 160)

3.3 *Synthesis*

To sum up, despite the fact that language and cultural identity are so closely interconnected, it is not appropriate to assume that a language “belongs” to a people or a country (or set thereof) for which that language is the native tongue.

In fact, in the case of English, native speakers cannot reasonably claim “ownership” of the language anymore, now that it has risen to the status of global language. Every person with a reasonable expertise and fluency in English has the same rights to it as anybody else. This means that non-native speakers do not have to abide by the regulations and standards dictated by the native-speaking community. ELF is a different entity from EMT. Therefore, the norms of the latter should not necessarily apply to the former any more than the other way around.

Nonetheless, ELF has always been studied in comparison with EMT: any deviation from EMT norms is unfairly identified as an “error”, despite the fact that maybe millions of people produce and understand it.

Moreover, the weight of political, economic and socio-cultural interest invested in the English language and the policies related to it has attracted much attention for ELF; unfortunately the result has been that ELF has often been harshly criticised and even stigmatised.
An identity crisis

The two critiques presented in the previous chapter have already been dismissed. However, the opportunity arises to touch on an issue that is referred to in the first example, and that might be at the heart of the reluctance to legitimize ELF. That is, identity: language can be seen as the invisible glue that holds local communities together, and is often seen as a vital aspect of the identities of said communities. This is why each community has its own accent and markers of in-group membership, such as specific pronunciations, idiomatic expressions and so on. It is also the reason for the existence of local dialects – to promote identity, which is not the same as the reason for the existence of standard varieties, which is to promote intelligibility (Crystal 2012).

English as a Mother Tongue (EMT) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) serve different purposes. Therefore, they are not in competition. The former acts as an intra-national language in Inner Circle and Outer Circle contexts, being rich in identity markers and
answering to the need for national identification, while the latter aims to allow international communication, especially among non-native speakers of English from the Expanding Circle, with a focus on mutual understanding and accommodation.

4.1 The identity of EMT speakers

“For decades, many people in the countries of former Yugoslavia made use of a common language, Serbo-Croatian. But since the civil wars of the early 1990s, the Serbs have begun to refer to their language as Serbian, the Bosnians to theirs as Bosnian, and the Croats to theirs as Croatian, with each side drawing attention to the linguistic features which are distinctive. A similar situation exists in Scandinavia, where Swedish, Norwegian and Danish are largely mutually intelligible, but are none the less considered to be different languages.”

- (Crystal 1997: 19)

As Crystal said, people in Sweden, Norway, Denmark do speak different languages, despite the undeniable degree of intelligibility that exists between them. The reason for the existence of separate national languages is the same as the reason for different national flags and national anthems (despite the fact that these mostly share the same topic: patriotism): that is, of course, to make it clear that the Danish are different from the Swedish, who are different from the Norwegians.

People tend to take any attack on their cultural identity very personally and, as a consequence, they also tend to take personally any attack, real or perceived, on their language. It is clear that EMT speakers, consciously or unconsciously, are reacting to what they
perceive as an attack on their own language, 'standard' English, any time another variety claims the right to its legitimization and recognition. It would certainly be interesting to take a look at how European countries reacted when they “suffered” the influence of British and American English in the 20th century.

The influence of English on other European languages in the 20th century has been described in vitriolic terms, such as "invasion" and "infiltration"; the English vocabulary was depicted as a nefarious force threatening the native vocabulary.

“Newspaper reports, television programmes, even learned papers refer to the phenomenon in terms of 'invasion', 'sixth column' and 'infiltration', the English vocabulary 'ousting' and 'strangling' the native word-stock. A recent attack on foreign influences on Spanish in the paper *ABC de Madrid* by Salvador de Madariaga is headed *El castellano en peligro de muerte* ('Spanish in danger of death'). A British paper complains about the American 'barbarization of the Queen's English', adding (ironically) that we should 'preserve the tongue that Shakespeare spoke'. *Parlez-vous franglais?* is a title of a polemic against the influence of English on French, in which the author inveighs against 'anglomanie', 'anglofolie' and 'américanolatrie'.”

- (Crystal 1975: 57)

While it may be difficult to distinguish between American and British influence, we should remember that attitudes towards a language are but the “surface reflections” of attitudes toward the culture and the people that speak it. It is not surprising then that "Americanisms have been reviled almost as long as America" (Crystal 1975).

Moreover, it is not just vocabulary items that seep from one language to the other, but also elements of other aspects of language:
pronunciation, orthography and grammar. Whereas spelling and pronunciation tend not to 'transmigrate' efficiently, as consonant and vowel sounds are altered to their nearest values in the 'receiving' language, orthography tends to be kept mostly unaltered: it is easier to recognize a loan-word in writing than it is listening to native speech (Crystal 1975).

In addition, the one aspect that perhaps should be investigated above all others regarding language influence is grammar. It is interesting to see whether loan-words are introduced with their own inflectional system into the foreign language, or if the foreign inflectional system takes precedence and 'overwrites' it. For example, in Dutch, English verbs are actualized through the use of the Dutch verb inflections, but English nouns keep their English plurals. This phenomenon generates significant linguistic pressure on the basic grammatical rules of the foreign language, and it can affect word order, ellipsis and other processes (Crystal 1975).

Following this line of reasoning, it might be possible to account for instances of ELF forms and patterns making their way into EMT (see the aforementioned case of EMT European diplomacies and politicians lamenting how Euro-English is influencing their own EMT speech). On top of that, there are other examples, such as the pluralization of uncountable nouns (Informations, Advices), the zero marking of 3rd person singular -s, and the interchangeability of the relative pronouns who and which, which appear to be common features of ELF (and of other Outer Circle and local varieties) and, despite contrasting 'standard' Inner Circle forms, are used even in colloquial EMT speech (Seidlhofer, in Kirkpatrick 2010 and in Jenkins 2009).
4.2 The negative reaction to English as a Lingua Franca

The issue of EMT's identity resonates strongly in the attitude shown by EMT communities regarding ELF. In the light of what has been said previously in this chapter, this type of reaction is hardly surprising, and a possible explanation will be provided.

One could argue that perhaps EMT speakers are reacting to ELF in much the same way that speakers of European languages have reacted (and sometimes still do) to the English language as a whole (since there is rarely any distinction between ELF and EMT, and even less outside the academic world), and that British speakers have reacted (and react) to Americanisms. EMT speakers feel their identity threatened, they feel robbed of their own language by foreigners, and they feel that their standards need to be defended from outside influences, just as speakers of local dialects feel when confronted with a much more significant national language. The EMT speaker seems so used to fighting from the other side of the fence (that is, the side of the ones "imposing" their language, their standards, their models on minority languages), that he fails to recognize the possibility that now it is EMT that is the minority language, and ELF might in fact be the variant spoken by the majority. And that is not something that is likely to change in the near future:

"[Small] scale revolutions in the world order would be unlikely to have much effect, given that English is now so widely established that it can no longer be thought of as 'owned' by any single nation."

- (Crystal 1997: 21)
Unfortunately, the EMT speaking community cannot face this issue as it has in the past, because now the tables are turned, and these speakers are not in the position to impose their own monomodels on the rest of the world. All this struggle is ultimately futile, mainly because:

"There can be no superimposed plot, with language. Controlled attempts to neologise, to change linguistic habits in the mass, have always failed"

- (Crystal 1975: 65; emphasis mine)

On top of that, the EMT speaking community cannot stifle the advance of ELF because the threat it represents to their identity is only a perceived one, not a real one.

Once the EMT speaker becomes more open to the idea that ELF is not a globally distributed copy of EMT, but an independent variety deserving to stand on its own, with reasons for its existence (to promote intelligibility) which are different from the reasons for EMT's existence (to promote identity), then the EMT speaker will see that his EMT is not being violated when, in ELF contexts, some features are ignored or changed.

“The existence of vigorous movements in support of linguistic minorities, commonly associated with nationalism, illustrates an important truth about the nature of language in general. The need for mutual intelligibility, which is part of the argument in favour of a global language, is only one side of the story. The other side is the need for identity – and people tend to underestimate the role of identity when they express anxieties about language injury and death.”

- (Crystal 1997: 18)
A similar concept is put forward by Motschenbacher, when he writes about the different uses of L1s (EMT variants could belong in this circle) and ELF:

"On the one hand, a speaker's L1 serves as a language of ethnic/national identification. English as a foreign language, on the other hand, generally fulfills the pragmatic function of communicating with people outside one's speech community and is therefore a language of communication. As each of these two language types is connected to a different function, they are unlikely to compete and can therefore exist side by side without one encroaching on the domains of the other."

- (Motschenbacher 2013: 8)

While it may seem that Motschenbacher is conflating the two core concepts of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), he is well aware of the distinction. His argument rests on the fact that today, especially in Europe, English may be taught as a foreign language, but it is used and learnt de facto as a lingua franca:

"In a similar way as English serves as an intra-national lingua franca between different ethnic groups in multilingual outer circle countries, English is at present likely to be used for communication between Europeans of various national backgrounds or intranationally between speakers of various ethnic backgrounds (e.g. in [Spain] or [Switzerland]; cf. Demont-Heinrich 2005; Droschel 2011; Reichelt 2006). The acquisition of English, accordingly, is often no longer felt to be that of a 'foreign' language in the literal sense of the word. Neither is it invariably motivated by assimilation to inner circle societies."

- (Motschenbacher 2013: 17)
4.3 Decoupling English as a Mother Tongue and English as a Lingua Franca

The phenomenon of English in the world today has two facets: one is English as it is spoken as a mother tongue, the other is English as it is spoken as a lingua franca. Each has a different appeal for learners, and each has a different purpose that sets it apart from the other, up to the point of possibly making one more appropriate than the other in different contexts.

In fact, the notion that only native speech is appropriate for any context, and that non-native speakers are at a disadvantage by default may be debunked: there may be significant advantages to being proficient in ELF in certain situations, especially when no native speaker is present, and that may be an advantage to EMT speakers too, when they find themselves in a context that calls for the use of English as a tool for intercultural communication.

“[The argument that non-native speakers are disadvantaged in contexts where they either have to interact or compete with native speakers of English] is an argument that is not specific to English and pertains to all languages that are learnt as foreign languages. Furthermore this argument can easily be turned on its head, because Elf enables speakers to communicate with people from cultures around the world. The use of English for such purposes is therefore a clear advantage that may be said to outweigh the disadvantages non-native speakers have to face. The more English becomes established as a lingua franca, the smaller these disadvantages will become.”

- (Motschenbacher 2013: 8)
To a hypothetical EMT speaker who indignantly accuses an ELF speaker of "not even speaking English", one could reply that he is, in fact, partly correct in that statement: the ELF speaker is not speaking English "as a Mother Tongue", but something different, governed by its own set of rules that, at different times, may or may not coincide with the standards of his English. The ELF speaker is making use of a language that is completely adequate for its purpose and deserving of equal respect: English "as a Lingua Franca".

“The concept of [World Standard Spoken English3] does not replace a national dialect: it supplements it. People who can use both are in a much more powerful position than people who can use only one. They have a dialect in which they can continue to express their national identity; and they have a dialect which can guarantee international intelligibility, when they need it.”

- (Crystal 1997: 138)

However, it would be incredibly naïve to think that resistance to ELF recognition is only a matter of changing public opinion on the subject: there are huge interests at stake, and any claim for ELF legitimization is likely to be met not only with prejudice, but also with the weight of political, historical, financial and ideological interests, as has been eloquently argued by Seidlhofer:

“To be realistic, a description which goes against the grain of people’s linguistic tradition and etiquette is likely to meet a great deal of resistance due to prejudice, market forces, vested interests, aesthetic arguments and practical questions.”

- (Seidlhofer 2000: 65)

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3 "World Standard Spoken English" (WSSE) is a term coined by Crystal (1997), and can be considered as a synonym for "English as a Lingua Franca" (ELF), "English as an International Language" (EIL) and so on.
In this chapter, some of the reasons behind the generally unfavourable attitude of the EMT speaking community with regards to the use of "their" language as the world's lingua franca have been addressed.

Once again, the notions of language, identity and nation are shown to be closely connected in the minds of the general public and of some scholars alike, despite the perceived inadequacy of current models for World Englishes that support this idea. Even Kachru's famous model has attracted some criticism (see Motschenbacher 2013) because it divides languages according to the different nations that speak it, therefore failing to account for a lingua franca that belongs to nobody and is spoken by a diverse group of people from different countries and lingua-cultural backgrounds.

As a consequence, one finds that EMT speakers are probably reacting to what they perceive as an attack on their language and their culture, when it comes to recognizing ELF.

Nonetheless, once one takes a step back and looks at the situation objectively, it is possible to see clearly that EMT and ELF can (and do) coexist, because they fill different niches in the linguistic “market”: they exist and they attract learners for different reasons.
A new question that arises, now that we have swept away or at least confronted the ideological issues regarding the recognition of ELF as a legitimate variant is this: how can we prove ELF really is what we claim it is, and not just “interlanguage”? The answer to this central question can be found in an analysis of ELF features that diverge from “standard” norms, in comparing ELF usage to that of other varieties of English which have already gained recognition and, finally, in stressing once again the importance of mutual intelligibility as the primary concern for ELF communication.

It is a matter worthy of empirical study, particularly the question of which items representing a deviation from EMT models should be considered legitimate ELF forms and which should be instead considered “errors”. In other words, we need to be able to distinguish difference from deficiency, and not assume that all deviation is an error. Any such study should probably focus on factors like systematicity, frequency and communicative effectiveness.

To illustrate, first a study conducted by Angelika Breiteneder
regarding the naturalness of one aspect of ELF, the case of “third person –s”, will be presented and discussed; then, another study conducted by Andy Kirkpatrick regarding the use of ELF as an Asian lingua franca and its features in comparison to EMT vernaculars. Finally, the conclusions of the two scholars will be compared.

5.1 Breiteneder’s study on ELF deviations

Angelika Breiteneder’s study focuses on one particular aspect of English morphology – that is, the peculiar inflection of the third person singular. She compiled a corpus and analysed the instances in which “third person –s” is used in accordance to EMT standards, when it is not, and when it is omitted.

5.1.1 The case of “third person –s”

Standard English has a very weak verb inflection system and, among the present tense verb forms (with the notable exception of irregular “to be”), only the 3rd person singular receives morphological marking by adding the so-called 'third person -s', or 3sg-s. In such an impoverished morphological environment, this feature is extremely notable, and it is perceived as one of the most prominent features of (standard) English, together with the dental fricative sounds, i.e. the “th-sounds” /ð/ and /θ/. The “third person -s” feature is “communicatively redundant”, and therefore enters what Trudgill calls
the “afunctional grammatical categories of Standard English”. Widdowson (1994) argues that, for this reason, certain grammatical features develop another function in the language:

“Firstly, it is precisely because grammar is so often redundant in communicative transactions that it takes on another significance, namely that of expressing social identity. The mastery of a particular grammatical system, especially perhaps those features which are redundant, marks you as a member of the community which has developed that system for its own social purposes. Conversely, of course, those who are unable to master the system are excluded from the community. They do not belong. In short, grammar is a sort of shibboleth. So when the custodians of standard English complain about the ungrammatical language of the populace, they are in effect indicating that the perpetrators are outsiders, non-members of the community.”

- (Widdowson 1994: 381)

“Third person –s”, to sum up, carries the function of a marker of in-group membership in EMT communities (Breiteneder 2005).

Breiteneder's study was conducted with a diverse group of speakers, members of two European associations from different linguacultural backgrounds (native speakers of 21 European languages4), who use ELF as an indispensable tool for negotiating their tasks. All of the participants have received high level education in English and have been trained to conform to Standard English norms in their formative years. The nature of the interactions is completely

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4 The languages represented are: Austrian German, British English, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Flemish, French, German German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish.
natural and not elicited nor arranged in any way; on top of that, it is important to note that the corpus obtained for this study is composed of highly specialised content, and the predominant nature of the discourse is transactional:

“The participants follow a strict agenda made up of a list of questions and issues requiring consideration. It is highly interactive, non-scripted talk-in-action that is recorded in my corpus.”

- (Breiteneder 2005: 6)

This is in line with what Seidlhofer suggests:

“[I]t is in the immediacy of interaction and the co-construction of spoken discourse that variation from the familiar standard norms becomes most apparent”

- (Seidlhofer 2004: 223)

The corpus of 50,000 words that was obtained from this study contains 141 instances of main verbs where one would expect to find 3sg-s, in accordance to Standard English norms. However, in 29 instances (slightly more than 20% of the total) what the researcher

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5 Brown and Yule (1983: 2) differentiate between transactional and interactional functions of discourse as follows: “That function which language serves in the expression of ‘content’ we will describe as transactional, and that function involved in expressing social relations and personal attitudes we will describe as interactional”. Moreover, the transactional dimension is further explained: “We shall call the language which is used to convey ‘factual or propositional information’ primarily transactional language. In a primarily transactional language we assume that what the speaker (or writer) has primarily in mind is the efficient transference of information. Language used in such a situation is primarily ‘message oriented’. It is important that the recipient gets the informative detail correct.”

6 Excluding instances of the verb to be, due to spatial constraints and because it represents an exception in Standard English, being an irregular verb which bears inflection on all persons in the present tense.
found is a 'zero marking', or 3sg-0. This extract from her corpus can serve as an example of a 3sg-0 used with the main verbs to make and to get:

“Extract 2 (DS3):

S8: that means (.) if he (.e)rm m- make disser- dissertation work in er french
S1: mm
S8: he get the <LNde> diplom {diploma} </LNde> of charles university (.e) and french university can give him also the <LNde> diplom {diploma} </LNde>”

- (Breiteneder 2005: 9)

The possibility that this could be explained as linguistic interference from some of the speakers’ mother tongues can be dismissed when we see that 14 different ELF speakers from nine different linguacultural varieties used 3sg-0.

In addition, it is just as important to note that no single participant completely lacks 3sg-s, and that 15 instances of main verbs exhibit “superfluous” -s marking, (generated by ten speakers from nine different backgrounds): that is to say, that the -s marking was used more than a few times when standard norms would not prescribe it, for example with plural subjects or past tense verbs (as in the following extract);

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7 The extracts presented in Breiteneder’s corpus adhere to the conventions of the VOICE corpus, available at http://www.univie.ac.at/voice
“Extract 4 (DS1):

S1: it’s e:r and that’s very awkward because the russians wishes to make a conference on the (. ) proceedings of the (. ) berlin (1) process.”

- (Breiteneder 2005: 10)

Only two speakers, however, used both 3sg-0 and “superfluous” -s marking, while the grand majority stuck with one or the other kind of deviation:

“[W]ith the exception of two individuals, all [English as a European Lingua Franca] users recorded in my corpus either stick to the intermittent absence of the ‘third person -s’ marker or its overgeneralisation, but they tend not to do both.”

- (Breiteneder 2005: 9)

It is important to note how both the usage of “superfluous” 3rd person marking or the absence of said 3sg-s when it is prescribed by the Standard English norms never result in a loss of intelligibility:

“[T]he overprovision of the -s marker does not hamper mutual intelligibility between the EELF speakers. Similarly, all instances of 3sgØ found in my corpus illustrate that 3sg-s is not essential for mutual intelligibility in the EELF interactions. Repeated backchannels (e.g. mm, mhm, yeah) and straightforward answers from other participants confirm that the ‘third person -s’ is communicatively redundant in the EELF talk recorded.”

- (Breiteneder 2005: 10)

The diffusion of these phenomena among the speakers (who tend to correctly use 3sg-s more often than not, anyway, thanks to their years of formal English education) and the fact that the use of
these features never resulted in a loss of mutual intelligibility, seem to rule out the possibility that these deviant features should be classified as mere “errors” and the idea that ELF speakers should be considered “permanent learners” (Medgyes, in Breiteneder 2005).

On the contrary, these deviations can be explained by analysing how and when they appear. Both the dropping of “third person –s”, 3sg-0, and the “superfluous” usage of the -s marking can be shown to be a natural phenomenon that ELF shares with many varieties of English, in all three Circles: for example, in East Anglian dialects, 3sg-0 is a common feature (Trudgill, in Breiteneder 2005); in several dialects of the British Isles the present tense -s occurs with all persons; and Black English Vernacular uses 3sg-0 throughout the conjugation of present tense verbs (Labov, in Breiteneder 2005). In the first summary of linguistic tendencies shared by some or most of the New Englishes, in 1984, one can learn that there is a tendency to use 3sg-0 (Platt, Weber, Ho, in Breiteneder 2005).

Therefore, one could certainly agree with Breiteneder that ELF use of both divergent features cannot be seen as “unnatural” or strange:

“On the contrary, the fact that both ways of departing from the prescriptive norms are reflected in various Englishes around the globe suggests that the grammatical manifestations of EELF usage actually resemble not only a common but also a natural language usage.”

- (Breiteneder 2005: 12)

Nevertheless, it is important to note how Breiteneder meant her study to be just exploratory in nature, making no claim of coming up with general findings and no absolute claims regarding the nature
of this linguistic phenomenon:

“It should be explicitly stated at the outset of the following case study of EELF talk that the observations and subsequent interpretations are restricted to my particular data sets. Given the narrow range of sampling, extrapolations are not legitimate (…)”

- (Breiteneder 2005: 8)

5.1.2 EELF deviant features as natural linguistic phenomena

Why these deviations from EMT norms happen, and why they are so diffuse around various varieties of English throughout the globe, is an interesting question indeed, and one that deserves an answer.

A possible explanation for both 3sg-0 and superfluous 3sg-s can be traced back to the fact that both phenomena are about the regularisation of a highly irregular, redundant feature, which carries the function of a marker of social prestige: by a process of analogy, the -s suffix is either applied or removed from all persons, because in many realities mutual intelligibility takes precedence over markers of social prestige. Indeed, it is not surprising that this phenomenon was observed in Breiteneder’s corpus, due to the highly transactional nature of the interactions that took place:

“During their meetings, the EELF speakers focus on their joint communicative enterprises and use EELF as a transactional language for the successful exchange of information. They direct their attention not to the language, but rather to the content of their discussions. It is under these conditions, i.e. speakers do not consciously monitor and control their speech patterns but focus on what they are
saying, that speakers tend to depart from standard norms.”

- (Breiteneder 2005: 13)

Redundancy reduction happens not only in ELF speech, in which the interactants are focused on the content and efficacy of their conversation rather than on the form of their language, but also in English-based creoles, pidgins and in informal EMT speech, in which successful communication is more critical than finesse. In addition, ellipses and clipping are common features of EMT, which reinforces even more the claim for ELF.

Breiteneder continues, providing two linguistic principles that can account for the sporadic adoption of superfluous -s marking in ELF, namely the Principle of Notional Concord (according to which, a verb may take a plural form with a singular noun if the meaning of the latter denotes a “plurality”) and the Principle of Proximity Concord (where the verb tends to agree with the closer noun, regardless of the fact that it may not be the head of the subject phrase). The kinds of instances in which these principles are applied in defiance of the Principle of Grammatical Concord (the verb agrees in number with the subject) are the same in ELF speech as in other varieties of English, yet ELF speech seems to be more free and liberal in its acceptance of both principles, especially the Principle of Proximity Concord. The two following extracts from Breiteneder’s corpus can be useful to exemplify the two aforementioned principles:

“Extract 8 (DS3):

S4: so (.) i think tha- i don- i don- really i don't know if it it will be possible to do so (.) but i think if er (.) the
“Extract 9 (DS3):

S11: this er joint degrees or master whatever are not only for US but for students and of course the students who apply for a master needs to know this master is useful in some sense for his job or whatever.

- (Breiteneder 2005: 16)

Obviously, Extract 8 is a perfect example of the Principle of Notional Concord: despite the fact that the community is a singular noun that would require a main verb (ask) showing a 3sg-s ending, the ELF speakers seem to be focusing more on the fact that the community represents a group of people and, as a consequence, treat the subject as notionally plural.

Similarly, Extract 9 is an excellent instance of the Principle of Proximity Concord at work: the presence of the noun a master between the subject the students and the verb needs is probably the cause of the overprovision of 3sg-s in the verb, which seems to agree with the noun that immediately precedes it.

In addition, several instances of 3sg-0 in Breiteneder’s ELF corpus involving the indefinite pronouns someone, everybody, anybody and anyone could be a consequence of the application of the Principle of Notional Concord. This is in line with what happens in EMT informal speech, since indefinite pronouns have always been
problematic when it comes to subject-verb agreement:

“The definite pronouns anybody/anyone, everybody/everyone, nobody/no one, and somebody/someone combine with singular verb forms, even though co-referent pronouns and determiners may be plural forms [...]”

- (Biber et al., in Breiteneder 2005: 20)

Moreover, some instances of 3sg-0 could be accounted for on the basis of different pronunciations, and what is called “consonant cluster simplification”. If we look at how word final consonant groups can be troublesome and are often reduced in various New Englishes, we might account for at least some instances of ELF 3sg-0 in Breiteneder's corpus (function-, want-, last-, ask-) (Breiteneder 2005).

Finally, Breiteneder argues that these linguistic departures from the standard norms provided by EMT may be due largely to linguistic contact, after all. She follows the lead of other scholars concerned with the New Englishes, who regard with interest the difficulty non-native speakers encounter when trying to master the unnatural morphology system of English verbs, and draws an enticing parallelism to ELF:

“[…] East Anglian third-person singular present-tense zero is in origin a contact feature which developed as a result of the presence of large numbers of non-natives in Norwich who, in using English as a lingua franca among themselves and with the native population, failed to master, as non-native speakers often do, the non-natural person-marking system of English verbs.”

- (Trudgill, in Breiteneder: 21–22)

Breiteneder argues that ELF is also characterised by linguistic
contact between individuals issuing from two or more different linguacultural backgrounds and, therefore, the simplification of 3rd person singular morphology found in ELF could also be explained as a result of linguistic contact.

“Even though the sociolinguistic circumstances of EELF are markedly different from those characterising native English dialects and New Englishes, EELF, too, is used in multilingual settings, necessarily creating contact situations which are not only limited to two different languages and lingua-cultures. The remarkable international overlap as far as the regularisation of the present tense verb morphology is concerned might therefore also be ascribed to the comparable milieus in which English is used and spoken in the contexts of e.g. early East Anglian English, New Englishes and EELF.”

- (Breiteneder 2005: 22)

5.2 **Kirkpatrick’s study of ELF in East and Southeast Asia**

English is not the first lingua franca to establish itself in Asia, a continent inhabited by a very diverse group of people, with hundreds of ethnic groups and hundreds of languages and dialects.

Kirkpatrick begins his study by providing an overview of the two most successful lingua francas in East and Southeast Asia before the advent of ELF.

He explains how Malay was deliberately chosen as a basis for the Indonesian lingua franca, Bahasa Indonesia, despite not being the most spoken language in the region (a title that belonged to Javanese).
Unlike the other contestants for the role of regional lingua franca, Malay was spoken only by a minority of people who posed no political threat; furthermore, Malay had a history as regional lingua franca and it was considered a relatively easy language to master, due to the close correspondence of written and spoken form.

Next, Kirkpatrick writes about a second lingua franca of East Asia, Putonghua, the ‘common language’ of China, based on Beijing Mandarin. Unlike Malay, Putonghua was chosen as a regional lingua franca for China simply because it represented the language of the powerful.

Regardless of the circumstances that led to the adoption of Bahasa Indonesia and Putonghua, both have been extremely successful as regional lingua francas. However, the primacy of the English language as a regional (and international) lingua franca is not really threatened by either language, as Kirkpatrick explains:

“Bahasa Indonesia and Putonghua are the two most widely spoken Asian-based lingua francas in East and Southeast Asia. Indeed, with over one billion speakers in China alone, Putonghua is far and away the most widely spoken language on earth, and its influence and reach is growing. For the moment, however, English remains the region’s (and world’s) primary lingua franca in that English is the language most commonly used by people who do not share a mother tongue. The extent to which this is so is staggering. Estimates of the numbers of people learning English in China alone vary from 200 to 350 million.”

- (Kirkpatrick 2010: 3)

Kirkpatrick then addresses the phenomenon of ELF in East and Southeast Asia, comparing the deviations from EMT norms found in his corpus with those found in many EMT vernaculars. He aims to
claim that British English is a minority dialect and that non-standard forms are the rule rather than the exception, regardless of which English variety they issue from.

5.2.1 Comparing ELF and other varieties of English

To begin with, Kirkpatrick gives a detailed overview of non-standard features that are deemed by scholars to be common in most, if not virtually all, vernacular varieties of English. He provides several lists of features compiled by different scholars (such as Britain and Chambers), and also a list of the non-standard features of ELF, as they can be identified in the VOICE corpus compiled by Seidlhofer and her team in Vienna.

Likewise, he provides a list of non-standard features typical of ASEAN ELF, and notes how many of the features, such as the absence of plural marking on nouns of measurement or the morpheme-final consonant cluster deletion, appear in both his list and the other lists regarding vernacular varieties of English and European ELF.

As a result, he concludes that it seems improbable that linguistic contact is the reason for the emergence of ELF non-standard features: he supports the notion that both universal tendencies in language change and linguistic contact may be behind the striking similarities between ASEAN Elf, European ELF and vernacular

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8 ASEAN is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. “[It] represents a group of ten nations, namely, and in alphabetical order: Burma (aka Myanmar), Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. ASEAN is a site of great cultural and linguistic diversity, with more than 1000 languages being spoken within its territory.” (Kirkpatrick 2010: 3)
varieties of EMT.

“That many of the non-standard features in lingua franca English are shared by different varieties of English, including British vernaculars, may surprise many people, as it is commonly assumed that the influence of the speakers’ first language will shape the English of such speakers. Yet the appearance of so many non-standard features which are shared across these varieties strongly suggests that something more than contact-induced change is responsible. There are simply too many shared but distinctive features here for one to argue that substrate language influence is the major cause. This is one reason for the increased interest in universals, but we must also be careful not to make too many universalist claims, as a single counterexample can overturn them. Both factors seem to be operating. Thomason (2009: 349) offers sound advice when she cautions against drawing a distinction between vernacular universals and contact-induced change because ‘many linguistic changes involve both kinds of process – that is various processes of contact-induced change and also universal tendencies of various kinds”

- (Kirkpatrick 2010: 6)

This conclusion by Kirkpatrick is not necessarily in contrast with the conclusion reached by Breiteneder, who sees in linguistic contact the main reason for ELF deviations, but rather, the two conclusions complement each other.
5.3 Synthesis

To conclude, this study can certainly serve as a hint to the direction to be taken in further studies, as it brings to light the fact that 3sg-0 and “superfluous” -s marking are common features, produced and understood in many different contexts, regardless of the age of the speakers or which Circle they come from: this puts ELF into perspective as a common and natural usage, appropriate for its contexts and purpose; simplification and regularisation are universal features of natural languages, and ELF speakers exhibit highly effective linguistic behaviour. Therefore, ELF should not be condemned but recognized (Breiteneder 2005).

While her work does indeed analyse in depth these two deviant features, Breiteneder is not the only researcher who provides us with meaningful examples that support the cause for a legitimization of ELF. Kirkpatrick, for example, by listing several non-standard features shared by all English varieties except the standard, such as the absence of plural marking on nouns of measurement or the morpheme-final consonant cluster deletion, and comparing them with non-standard features of ELF among Asian senior officials, provides further ground for the idea that ELF is not at all odd or unnatural.

However, while Breiteneder sees linguistic contact as a major factor to explain these features since many other varieties sharing those features probably obtained them because of linguistic contact (and ELF is linguistic contact by definition), Kirkpatrick is sceptical, and perhaps more audacious in suggesting that something more than mere linguistic contact is needed explain these occurrences.
On the one hand, Kirkpatrick acknowledges the great interest that linguistic universals spark nowadays, on the other he is also cautious about making an outright universalistic claim; this is not to say, however, that universal tendencies (like regularisation and simplification, as seen in Breiteneder's study) and language contact together cannot contribute to explain the shared common ground between ELF and other English varieties.
Intelligibility and other concerns

What is it that distinguishes the use of English in lingua franca contexts, in which it is used mainly for communication between non-native speakers, from its use as a mother tongue, in which it is used mostly for communication between native speakers? A possible answer to this question appeared already in Chapter 4.

In fact, it can be argued with confidence that the two types of English are a response to two separate needs: while ELF fulfils the need for an efficient tool for intercultural communication across language barriers, EMT fulfils the need for recognition of the lingua-cultural identity of native speakers. In other words, the reasons for the existence of ELF are different from those for EMT: the former makes mutual understanding and intelligibility its main focus, while the latter is more concerned with consolidating the native speaker’s identity as, precisely, a native speaker of English.

Interestingly enough, it appears that the very element that seems to be at the base of ELF interaction has been used as the basis
for another form of criticism towards ELF itself: concerns have been voiced about ELF’s true intelligibility.

To begin with, the particular cooperative style in which ELF communication takes place, with a certain leniency on the part of each interactant regarding deviations from EMT norms, has been identified as a possible sign of mutual disattention rather than cooperation, despite the fact that this characteristic is one of those for which ELF is praised the most.

In addition, another area in which concerns regarding ELF intelligibility have been voiced is pronunciation: with no strong, established norms on how speakers are supposed to pronounce words, some scholars fear that, once detached from EMT norms, ELF may indeed splinter into a multitude of mutually unintelligible pronunciations, thus going against the very nature of an international (or even global, in the case of English) language.

Despite the fact that these issues could, perhaps, be settled with careful study and examination of ELF’s intelligibility, one finds that, unfortunately, virtually all the studies regarding intelligibility are prejudiced and biased, at least in part.

Nevertheless, it is never too late to fix the errors of the past, but it is essential that they should be critically examined and denounced as such in order to allow new research to be conducted without ideological burdens. It is often said that, when doing scientific research, one is sitting on the shoulders of giants: the risk here is that the giants may stifle new, unprejudiced reflection on some topics under the weight of prejudices and traditionalist views.
6.1 What is intelligibility?

Intelligibility is a crucial concept in communication, since it represents the degree to which a piece of information is efficiently exchanged between different speakers. It is a concept that is easy to grasp in a rudimentary, unconscious way, yet difficult to describe with a clear-cut definition.

For example, Munro and Derwing give their own definition:

“Intelligibility may be broadly defined as the extent to which a speaker’s message is actually understood by a listener (…)”

- (Munro and Derwing 1995: 289)

Another, less technical definition is the following, from the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

“The quality or character of being intelligible; capability of being understood; comprehensibility.”

– (Oxford Dictionary)

Intelligibility is, therefore, the same mutual understanding that is identified by most ELF researchers as the primary scope and goal of ELF communication.

For this reason, it is of utmost importance that English learners who will primarily put their English in practice in international
settings (which call for ELF rather than EMT proficiency) are taught techniques and strategies to increase the level of intelligibility of their speech. Indeed, international communication is an unpredictable experience, and while it may be impossible to teach everything learners will ever need in such situations, it is quite possible to help them develop certain skills that will allow them to work around the difficulties they encounter.

To sum up, beside other aspects of communication, such as grammar and vocabulary, language teaching should also impart useful strategies that will allow them, above all, to communicate effectively, regardless of grammatical correctness.

“What is contextually intelligible or unintelligible depends significantly on the participants’ ability (and willingness) to negotiate meaning, productive as well as receptive accommodation skills, and the degree of overlap of the interactants’ linguistic repertoires. Making language learners efficient Elf users, therefore, is not just a matter of teaching the pronunciation, grammar and lexicon of English but additionally of familiarising them with central strategies of collaborative meaning negotiation (independently of notions of grammatical correctness).”

- (Motschenbacher 2013: 24)

6.2 Criticism of ELF intelligibility

Given the primarily transactional and pragmatic nature of international communication, intelligibility easily takes precedence
over adherence to standard norms and to the stylistic quality of the language used. In other words, in ELF contexts, the most important aspects are efficacy and successful communication: the focus is on content rather than on form.

Nonetheless, concerns have been voiced about ELF’s actual level of intelligibility. Perhaps unsurprisingly, once again the greatest criticism of ELF may be coming from the Inner Circle countries.

6.2.1 A mutual lack of attention

To begin with, it has been noted that, in ELF interaction, based on mutual support and collaboration on part of all participants, the speakers tend to gloss over difficulties and adopt a “let-it-pass” principle. These findings can actually be interpreted not as a sign of ELF efficacy, but as a symptom of mutual lack of attention: according to this line of thought, the interactants would be acting as initiators only, and not as receivers (House, in Seidlhofer 2000: 60).

However, the data collected by Breiteneder (2005) and Seidlhofer (2000) seems to completely disprove House's hypothesis: in both data sets there are clear examples of successful and cooperative communication – the interactants are receiving as well as producing meaningful speech.

To illustrate this point, Seidlhofer provides the transcript of a conversation between a Swiss German and a French speaker, negotiating the choice of the most appropriate picture for a charity campaign (cf. Seidlhofer 2000: 62–63). Afterwards she analyses this
piece of data and compares it to what House says, essentially providing evidence against his claim that ELF may have a problem with intelligibility, and that mutual support and cooperation in constructing the conversation are just a myth or a façade for a mutual lack of attention.

“It is obvious that the interactants are satisfied with their discussion: they agree on their criteria and negotiate a consensus, so in that sense we can regard this exchange as successful communication. The conversation also has a constructive, collaborative feel to it: in contrast to the data discussed in House 1999 (see above), there is ample evidence of the interactants acting as recipients as well as initiators: the yes’s and yeah’s tend to be genuine expressions of agreement, back-channelling is provided in the form of Hm hm and Uh huh, and there is even one instance of one speaker completing an utterance for her interlocutor (lines 26-27). But the point to be noted is that this communicative success comes about despite the fact that there is hardly a turn which is ‘correct’ or idiomatic by EMT standards.”

- (Seidlhofer 2000: 63)

On the one hand, Seidlhofer admits that the conversation she provides relies heavily on shared context and has a limited chance of resulting in conflict or misunderstanding. On the other, she still claims that these are exactly the circumstances under which ELF tends to be employed: the speakers have a practical issue at hand, and they take advantage of their shared ELF to communicate and to find a solution; deviations from EMT norms are irrelevant if they do not result in miscommunication.
“Despite all these ‘errors’ which most EFL teachers would certainly consider in need of correction and remediation, the exchange between Reto and Stephanie can be regarded as an instance of successful ELF communication. Of course this type of interaction relies heavily on shared context and has a limited potential for misunderstanding and conflict, and in many situations in which ELF is used these conditions will not apply. But this caveat does not invalidate the observation that for the purpose at hand, the kind of English that is employed works, it serves the participants quite adequately for doing the job they have to do.”

- (Seidlhofer 2000: 64)

Moreover, the same kind of “back-channelling” can be found in Breiteneder’s corpus (2005), thus reinforcing the argument in favour of ELF intelligibility.

6.2.2 Pronunciation problems

Beside the accusations that perhaps, in ELF, intelligibility and mutual cooperation may only be a myth (see above), concerns are also raised regarding a possible fragmentation of ELF pronunciation, leading to intelligibility issues.

Jenkins agrees that differences in pronunciation may be at the root of problems of mutual intelligibility between speakers of different varieties:

“Since it is in their pronunciation that the existing and emerging second language (L2) varieties diverge most from each other linguistically, it is arguably this linguistic area that most threatens intelligibility.”
The criticism of the lack of fixed ELF pronunciation standards means that different speakers may not be able to communicate with each other effectively after all: as “standard” pronunciation norms “splinter” into more and more variations and sub-variations, ELF may indeed incur problems of unintelligibility between different accents.

Rajadurai is discussing the various non-native varieties of English when she argues:

“[A]s pronunciation differences continue to develop in defiance of L1 pronunciation norms, concerns have been voiced about intelligibility: how do we ensure that speakers of various Englishes remain intelligible to one another?”

- (Rajadurai 2007: 88)

Nonetheless, this same preoccupation regarding non-native varieties may be considered to involve the various actualizations of ELF.

Ultimately, the fear is that ELF may not be a wholly cohesive entity, and that it may actually be (or become) fractured into multiple isolated varieties spoken by individual “constellations” of speakers.

However, it is my strong opinion that such a development is not compatible with the very nature of ELF interaction as it takes place today, in the Age of Information (see Chapter 7), and on a global scale: people are, indeed, forming new constellations of (mostly non-native) speakers every day. However, none of these constellations is a closed, immutable system. Each of these constellations will be suddenly formed, and just as suddenly deconstructed when its
members move on to form other new constellations. The same ELF speaker can be exposed to and communicate with hundreds of people each day, from all over the world, ensuring that his usage of ELF will remain malleable enough to entertain conversations with an ever-changing array of people.

Additionally, a similar process can be said to happen in mother tongue communication: every conversation is conducted in a specific pseudo-variety of the native tongue common to all speakers, a pseudo-variety that is unconsciously negotiated and agreed upon for the one specific conversation but will probably be summarily discarded when it ends. When each individual member entertains a new conversation with other speakers, they will once again negotiate and adapt (albeit to a far lesser degree than in ELF contexts) their speech. These concepts seem to be in line with what Rajadurai and Mackenzie write:

“With a few notable exceptions, the vast majority of studies seem to ignore the fact that speech is context-specific and highly dependent on the topic, participants, and situation. Kachru (1986: 106) asserts that ‘the whole concept of intelligibility is open to question if we do not include the appropriate parameters of the context of situation as relevant to intelligibility at various levels’. The fact is that people speak differently in different situations (intra-speaker variation), and people react to speech differently in different settings.”

- (Rajadurai 2007: 90)

“Schneider (2012: 87–88) suggests that in specific types of ELF communication – ‘contexts where interaction remains stable in similar constellations over a longer period’ – the ‘stabilizing effects of mutual accommodation between the
speakers and speaker groups involved’ may lead to ‘increased conformity via negotiation’ and, ultimately, the kind of ‘stable communal varieties’ found among ESL speakers in New Englishes. Perhaps. But stable long-term interaction among similar constellations of speakers is only a part of ELF. Knapp argues that professional communities account for less spoken ELF than random encounters involving infrequent users such as tourists. Users like these, he says, ‘normally do not memorize the linguistic means they employed more or less successfully,’ so that ‘if a similar situation arises they have to reinvent their lingua franca English’ (p.133). Such reinventions will be similar, as L2 users typically employ similar communication strategies, but they will not lead to a stable set of linguistic forms or a group or community that share them.”

- (Mackenzie 2014: 13)

For these reasons, one could argue that there is ultimately no basis for the fear that ELF may be doomed to fragmentation in multiple mutually unintelligible varieties. Its very nature in the modern world ensures the continuation of mutual intelligibility.

6.3 Intelligibility studies

Intelligibility has been considered a topic of the utmost importance, especially regarding ELF, and it has been the subject of a number of studies.

Unfortunately, however, on top of possible discrepancies regarding clear definitions and uneven methodologies, intelligibility
studies may be plagued by the bias, once again (see Chapter 3), that ELF needs to be measured against EMT. Rajadurai provides an accurate review of intelligibility studies, and writes that

“The lack of consistency in intelligibility studies and their findings may be attributed to differences in definitions, methodologies, and samples used as well as variables investigated. Nevertheless, that intelligibility is a crucial concept in communication – perhaps especially critical in cross-cultural interaction – is not disputed. What is open to question, though, is the manner in which intelligibility is routinely investigated in most (though not all) studies. It is clear that many of the studies share a number of shortcomings, both methodological and conceptual (…)”

- (Rajadurai 2007: 89)

In her review, one learns that intelligibility has been studied in conjunction with accentedness and comprehensibility, and has been rated as the most important element of the three, with comprehensibility the second most important, and accentedness the least important for successful communication of the three.

Moreover, research has taken into account the effects of variables such as familiarity, rate of speaking, and shared L1s on ratings assigned to intelligibility, and has concluded that there may well be a 'cost' of having a foreign accent in terms of the listener's reaction and ratings. In fact, listeners can be irritated by a non-standard accent. It might take them longer to process information, and they might also judge negatively the speaker's personality, his suitability as a norm-providing model and his acceptability and employability in the workplace.

However, a review of L2 intelligibility studies suggests an
approach that is indeed favourable to native varieties and, conversely, highly biased against non-native varieties.

“Aside from methodological limitations, another factor responsible for much of the uneasiness and dissatisfaction that emerge from a review of L2 intelligibility studies is their uncritical adherence to a paradigm that exalts the native speaker and affirms his superiority.”

- (Rajadurai 2007: 91)

The scholar also highlights several misconceptions and “myths” about non-native varieties in relation to native speakers and their accents.

One misconception is that only non-native speech is accented, and anyone that does not speak with a native accent is condemned for his accent; however, in many Outer Circle regions it is the local accent, and not the “standard” British or American accent, that is perceived as accent-less.

Other misconceptions are that non-native speech lacks intelligibility and that the non-native speaker is responsible for communication problems by default: studies have shown that even strongly accented speech can be highly intelligible, and that equating accentedness with unintelligibility is a serious mistake that is the basis for many evaluation instruments (Munro and Derwing, in Rajadurai 2007); moreover, one should not forget that communication is a cooperative process and requires just as much effort on the speaker's part as on the listener's, so it is unfair to solely blame the non-native speaker for an unsuccessful interaction.

Finally, many assume that it is native speakers who should
provide norms, that “standard” accents are perfectly intelligible and that EMT speakers are the best candidates to evaluate the intelligibility of non-native speakers.

However, such a monolithic, monocentric approach clashes with the reality of the world and of how languages are seen today, quite apart from being unrealistic and completely antithetic to the concept of non-native identity. On top of that, EMT speakers, often monolingual, are in fact not the best candidates to make a judgement, since the vast majority of English conversation today will take place solely among non-native speakers.

To conclude, it needs to be stressed that standard accents are not the most intelligible, rife as they are with elisions, assimilations and difficult-to-pronounce sounds, not to mention stress-timed rhythm.

6.4 Synthesis

To summarize, the role of intelligibility in communication cannot be stressed enough; moreover, mutual understanding becomes even more critical in international communication, in ELF contexts, in which the highly content-driven, cooperative nature of the discourse focuses on intelligibility rather than on linguistic flourish.

Despite the paucity of relevant studies conducted in a rigorous, proper way that would not measure ELF equating deviance from EMT norms to a decreased intelligibility, all the concerns regarding this aspect of ELF can be set aside when considering the evidence that
proves ELF is indeed effective, global and perfectly intelligible, at least according to the millions of non-native speakers that do speak it.

If the results obtained by these studies mean anything, it is either that there is a strong prejudice in favour of EMT standards, or that EMT speakers are possibly the only ones who find ELF less intelligible than EMT.

“Intelligibility is not necessarily reciprocal and may be the result rather than the cause of negative social-psychological attitudes which have, themselves, reduced the receiver’s motivation to make an effort to understand.”

- (Jenkins 2000: 14)
Identity and denomination

ELF is an indisputable reality, upon which a great many of the world's interactions, businesses and negotiations are built. Despite the fact that, in the past, other lingua francas have existed and have been quite successful for their purposes and in their own contexts, one needs to acknowledge that we live in a situation without precedent for an international language. For the first time ever, we are confronted with a lingua franca that, as of today, presents a 1:4 ratio between its native and non-native speakers worldwide; on top of that, this gap is expected to increase, because of the difference in population growth rates in different areas. By 2050, EMT speakers are expected to constitute less than 5% of the world's population (Crystal 2012). There can be no doubt that the extraordinary and unprecedented nature of ELF is a by-product of the so-called Age of Information.
7.1  The rise of English in the Age of Information

The invention of the internet has been a social revolution but also a linguistic one: the web allows for a new kind of communication, one that finds itself in between written and spoken forms, regarding characteristics such as permanency and dynamicity.

“The one thing we can say about traditional writing is that it is permanent. You open a book at page 6, close the book, then open it at page 6 again. You expect to see the same thing. You would be more than a little surprise if the page had changed in the interim. But this kind of impermanence is perfectly normal on the Web – where indeed you can see the page changing in front of your eyes. Words appear and disappear, in varying colours. Sentences slide onto the screen and off again. Letters dance around. The Web is truly part of a new, animated linguistic channel – more dynamic than traditional writing, and more permanent than traditional speech. It is neither speech nor writing. It is part of a new medium.”

- (Crystal 2003: 6)

In addition, in email, it is not at all uncommon to find instances of poor typing accuracy, misspellings and errors in capitalization and punctuation. Nonetheless, these deviations almost never result in decreased intelligibility, and they seldom constitute a problem.

“In e-mails, what is revolutionary is not the way some of its users are cavalier about their typing accuracy, permitting misspellings and omitting capitalization and punctuation.
This is a rather minor effect which rarely interferes with intelligibility. It is patently a special style arising out of the pressures operating on users of the medium, plus a natural desire (especially among younger – or younger-minded – users) to be idiosyncratic and daring. And that is how it is perceived.”

- (Crystal 2003: 6)

Originally, in the 1980s, the internet was a totally English medium, and at the end of the 20th century 70% of internet usage was in English. This has certainly helped the spread of the language as a lingua franca, but it might not be the most relevant contribution this technology had to offer to the success of ELF.

A person with internet access can, in theory, reach anyone else who also has internet access around the globe, almost instantly, and communicate with them. Year by year, the internet has become easier to use and more present in the everyday lives of many people in the world. Nowadays, one does not need to have a degree in computer sciences to use the internet; people can access the web, send and receive emails, read an online newspaper through their phones, their tablets, even their watches, and soon even through special glasses. We are interconnected in this invisible web, which allows us to interact with myriad people we have never even met, every day. We are no longer confined to our community by the boundaries of space and time; the scope of our interactions has changed because of this technological leap, encompassing a circle much wider than our local community or even nation, and, therefore, our means of communicating has to change. While a century ago we could get on well by knowing a single language or dialect, today we cannot afford
to content ourselves with being monolingual, lest we be cut off from a significant portion of the opportunities and events that make up modern life. This reality serves as further evidence contrary to the criticism that ELF is fragmented into multiple different local sub-varieties spoken by each "constellation" of speakers. There is no fixed constellation in ELF: each speaker will likely create multiple different “constellations” each day with different speakers (cf. Chapter 6).

7.2 ELF as a medium to express identity

The importance of the internet in promoting a global network of communication can serve to highlight once again that ELF exists for a specific reason: to promote mutual intelligibility, even across oceans and continents. However, the fact that ELF is more concerned with effective communication does not exclude the possibility that ELF speakers express identity through ELF.

“One way of distinguishing a world English from English as a lingua franca is to recognise that world Englishes are primarily about the expression of identity and the reflection of local culture(s), while English as a lingua franca is more concerned with communication, although this is not to say, of course, that ELF speakers cannot express identity through ELF. As I have argued elsewhere (Kirkpatrick 2007), however, when speakers use a language to express identity, they will use terms, idioms, accents and strategies that are shared by the local speech community. When they are using a language in order to communicate across cultural and linguistic boundaries, however, they will
consciously edit local references and so forth from their speech, as their main aim is to be understood.”

- (Kirkpatrick 2010: 8)

In other words, different speakers will unconsciously bend the language they use in order to express their identity, while always focusing their conscious efforts on communicating efficiently.

In addition, the English language is no longer tied to Anglo-American culture, and most speakers have no problem attaching their own cultural identities to a language that is not their L1. Motschenbacher dismisses the idea that English can only be used to express an Anglo-American identity.

“The strict equalisation of English with Anglo-American culture automatically denies non-native speakers the right to attach other identity values to their use of English. The claim that English can only be used to express an Anglo-American mind-set (e.g. Fiedler 2010) is reminiscent of discussions about linguistic relativism (…) which are generally no longer viewed as tenable today (Gnutzmann 2008:78; House 2008a:77). Even though language plays an important role in the expression of culture, this does not mean that language is deterministically linked to language in the sense that the use of a certain language is restricted to an (automatic) construction of a certain national identity.”

- (Motschenbacher 2013: 8)

Indeed, it seems that, since two goals are set in front of each speaker (identity and intelligibility), the more flexible and free from normative obligations a language is, the better the speaker can achieve not just one, but both goals.
In fact, ELF seems to fit perfectly into this framework: it is a language that, by default, allows creativity and appropriation of the language itself on the part of each individual speaker, meeting the need both for identity and for intelligibility. Motschenbacher argues that the fact that ELF does not have a fixed standard allows for the expression of non-Anglophone backgrounds.

“ELF research does not practice any normative reduction to particular features. It rather considers non-native modifications as legitimate innovations as long as they do not impede communicative efficiency. Divergence from native varieties is not automatically equalled with deficiency. Current ELF research is characterized by a tolerance of these non-native features and is not usually driven by a motivation to foster “neo-standardisation” (Jenkins 2007:18). This creates a conceptual space for acknowledging that competent ELF speakers can be widely intelligible without sacrificing their sociocultural identifications as speakers from various non-Anglophone backgrounds. Non-native ELF features that are no obstacle to successful communication are accepted as potential indexes of speakers’ cultural identities.”

- (Motschenbacher 2013: 25)

7.3 Giving ELF a proper name

The expression of the identity of EMT speakers, who probably feel threatened by the emergence of ELF, has already been addressed in Chapter 4. On top of that, in the light of what has been said
previously in this chapter, it is hard to deny the oppurtunity that ELF offers to its speakers regarding the expression of their native culture.

However, an element that seems to be missing from this framework is the identity of ELF speakers regarding ELF itself, i.e. their identity "as ELF speakers". When a Japanese person speaks English as a lingua franca, he certainly a must express his L1 identity, but isn’t the fact that he is “one of the global village” also a significant part of his identity?

One could argue that the expression of ELF identity as such is an issue so tightly interwoven with the issue of ELF recognition that they may as well refer to the same thing.

Nowadays, the most commonly held mindset regarding language recognition seems to be to allow communities the freedom to adjudicate by themselves which policies would work best for them, and that if a community has enough political power and presents itself as solid, cohesive force, they will gain the legitimation of their own language. However, in order for a language to be recognized as autonomous and given the right to its own descriptions, on its own terms, two criteria must be satisfied, otherwise any claim will likely go unheard.

“It seems that if a community wishes its way of speaking to be considered a ‘language’, and if they have the political power to support their decision, there is nothing which can stop them doing so. The present-day ethos is to allow communities to deal with their own internal policies themselves, as long as these are not perceived as being a threat to others. However, to promote an autonomous language policy, two criteria need to satisfied. The first is to have a community with a single mind about the matter, and the second is to have a community which has enough
political-economic ‘clout’ to make its decision respected by outsiders with whom it is in regular contact. When these criteria are lacking, any such movement is doomed.”

- (Crystal 2012: 173)

On the one hand, ELF certainly fits the second criterion, that of having enough political and financial power to, at least in theory, ensure that this claim for recognition is not ignored. Due to the fact that it is as much spoken by presidents, billionaires, academics and popular sports and entertainment figures as by common people, the claim in favour of ELF as an autonomous variety would indeed have more than a few powerful voices supporting it.

Nonetheless, whether ELF also fits the first criterion remains an open question. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to ascertain whether the ELF community has a single mind on the matter, and any doubt is legitimate.

Still, one should not forget that ELF represents a unicum in the history of language, in terms of diffusion. In fact, every other time that a language has “applied” for language status, it was a minority language trying to obtain recognition from a majority language. On the contrary, ELF, in its various actualizations, is the variant spoken by a vast majority of people, greatly outnumbering all L1 and even L2 variants. This may mean that the criteria Crystal suggests would not fully apply to a global language such as English, and they could either be ignored or replaced by new criteria.

In any case, regardless of whether a language fulfils these criteria, one can expect any proposal for language status to be invariably met with strong criticism and to be highly controversial. Of
course, ELF would be no exception, as should be clear by now.

It would seem that there is little hope for the recognition and legitimation of ELF, if it were not for an interesting precedent: Crystal provides us with the example of Ebonics, previously called "Black Vernacular English" or African-American English.

While Ebonics did not meet the two criteria, because the US black community and its prominent figures had mixed views on the matter, it still attained some degree of recognition.

“Although the intentions behind the proposal [for the legitimation of Ebonics, previously seen as a form of vernacular,) were noble, and attracted some support, it was denounced by people from across the political and ethnic spectrum, including such prominent individuals as Education Secretary Richard W. Riley, the black civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson and writer Maya Angelou. Quite evidently the two criteria above did not obtain: the US black community did not have a single mind about the matter, and the people who had the political-economic clout to make the decision respected also had mixed views about it”

- (Crystal 2012: 173)

On this account, one could certainly agree with Crystal that when what was once classified as a mere variation of English, like Black Vernacular English, was finally given a proper name, with no reference to English whatsoever, something changed in the people’s perception of the language itself.

“By giving a distinct name, Ebonics, to what had previously been recognised as a variety of English, a hidden boundary in the collective unconscious seems to have been crossed. It is in fact very unusual to assign a novel name to a variety of English in this way, other than in
the humorous literature, where such names as Strine (a spelling of an imagined casual Australian pronunciation of the word ‘Australian’) can be found.”

- (Crystal 2012: 173–174)

It is as if, by giving Ebonics its name, this variant was detached from other forms of English and freed from any comparison with EMT.

Therefore, one could plausibly argue that when people (especially those outside of academic circles) see a linguistic variety with a completely different, independent name, they tend to disregard any amount of similarity and mutual intelligibility with any other language, and treat them as autonomous, equally legitimate languages. On the other hand, by explicitly referring to a language as a variation, a deviation from the language it originated from, we are reinforcing the idea that one is less than the other, one is "wrong" and the other is "pure", one is "broken" and the other is "real". Once again, a comparison with the Scandinavian languages is useful to illustrate a point: just imagine if, instead of having a proper name that would distinguish them and put them on equal ground, Swedish and Norwegian were called "Danish as spoken in Sweden" and "Danish as spoken in Norway". Such a definition would instantly change the perception the public has of those languages, of those people, of those countries. Suddenly, the Danes would be seen as the true owners of the language that they have graciously allowed the Swedish and the Norwegians to use. That is precisely what is already happening with ELF and EMT (cf. Chapter 3).

Curiously enough, Crystal seems not to be concerned with the
global language being referred to as a variety of English and, for example, postulates the emergence of what he would call “World Standard Spoken English” (a name that has the same inherent problems that both “English as a lingua franca” and “English as an international language” have). However, Ammon seems to agree with giving the world language a specific name in line with its purpose, a name that would disconnect it from the Anglo-American culture. In fact he suggests the adoption of “Globalish” as a name for what today is called English as a Lingua Franca.

“Hartmut Haberland (1989: 936f) has proposed the development of a “new, independent norm of academic English”, which “would be different from US or British English to the degree that the speaker of those dialects would have to learn it, if they want to write it or speak it properly” and which “would serve the purposes of its community of speakers better than any existing standard of English would, since it would be far less culture-bound and ethnocentric than all the other Englishes we can choose between today.” In my view, this new language should not be limited to academic use, and should also be given a new name in line with its function, for example “Globalish” (…)”

To conclude, the unprecedented diffusion and widespread success of ELF can be largely attributed to the huge developments in information technology of the late 20th century. Speakers from all over the world have been allowed to communicate and interact with virtually every other person on the planet, thus increasing the importance of a global lingua franca.

Furthermore, research has provided compelling evidence contrary to the opinion that ELF deprives non-native speakers of their own linguacultural identities. In fact, ELF has proven to be the perfect tool for attaining both goals of the ELF speaker, namely intelligibility and identity, in virtue of its flexibility, tolerance for deviations and cooperative nature.

Lastly, the question arises as to whether there may also be an “ELF identity” that needs to be expressed: ELF speakers may want their identity “as ELF speakers” to be recognized, and that closes the circle, redirecting attention to the issue of recognition of ELF.

However, regardless of the effort spent on providing compelling evidence of the linguistic features that ELF shares with other varieties, such as Outer Circle Englishes or Inner Circle dialects, public opinion will probably not change on the matter until ELF is given a proper name. This is of extreme importance, since ELF lacks a homogeneous community, united by a strong cultural background, like those that support the claims of the minority varieties I just mentioned. As long as ELF is referred to in terms of English "as a lingua franca",
"as a global language" or "as an international language", it will never be able to come out of the shadow cast by EMT.
Conclusion

Undeniably, the unprecedented diffusion and pervasiveness of the English language in every domain of modern life and across any national border are exciting topics for research and discussion. In fact, never in the history of humanity has a language attained such a global status: of all the numerous other instances of lingua francas that have been employed in the past, there is none that can be claimed to have been as global, from both a geographical and a societal point of view.

As a consequence, non-native speakers of English greatly outnumber native speakers; this means that a great number of the communications and interactions that take place through the medium of English, happen between non-native speakers, often without the involvement of a native speaker.

Consequently, this fact has called into question the ownership of the language itself. Indeed, many scholars agree that once a language attains a truly global status, it belongs to everyone that speaks it. Besides, does it make any sense that the minority of native speakers provide the norms for the language’s use, even when it is spoken between non-native speakers?

As a result, the issue of ownership of the English language raises other questions, namely whether it is even possible to place ELF
inside the current paradigms of World Englishes, and whether ELF itself should be recognized as a legitimate variety. This has been the subject of extensive research.

To summarize the findings, the claim for the recognition of ELF is supported by the fact that it exists to respond to a specific need – that is, to ensure mutual intelligibility. In fact, ELF appears to serve this purpose better than the alternative, EMT, which comes full of prestige markers and linguistic traits that make it hard to use for non-natives. On top of that, ELF can also be said to show many similarities to other varieties of English, notably Inner Circle vernaculars and Outer Circle varieties, and therefore presents itself as a natural development of the language, and not just interlanguage. In other words, deviation from standard EMT models should not be interpreted as an error when it does not impede intelligibility, but rather as a legitimate variant.

Of course, any claim for legitimation is met with harsh criticism, and ELF is the rule rather than the exception: concerns have been voiced about the possibility that ELF promotes Anglo-American culture at the expense of other cultures; that English as a Lingua Franca is really a façade for a killer language that will supplant other national languages; that ELF lacks any normative power and, therefore, is bound to fragment over time into myriad mutually unintelligible sub-varieties.

Nonetheless, most (if not all) of these criticisms can be ignored, or at least partially dismissed, once one accounts, for example, for the fact that ELF exists to ensure mutual intelligibility, and not to supplant the national languages. On top of that, the very
nature of the modern world seems to ensure that ELF will not fragment. Lastly, the fluidity and flexibility that characterise ELF arguably ensure the possibility of using this language to express not just cultural identities usually associated with EMT, but any identity the speaker may wish to express. Unfortunately, the many studies that could help the claim for ELF recognition have so far suffered, at least in part, from prejudices and biases in favour of EMT.

To conclude, whether ELF will ever be recognized and officially accepted as a global lingua franca is an open question. Unfortunately, there are strong interests at stake, ranging from socio-cultural to political and economic, which seem to stand in the way of a true legitimation of ELF. In fact, the three steps that would constitute the recognition of a variety and its autonomy from the mother language (decoupling of the variety from the mother language, recognition of the variety as legitimate and independent, and giving a proper name to the new variety) seem not to be working. The process is at a standstill at the first step: in the case of a lingua franca like ELF, originating from a powerful and important culture such as the Anglo-American culture, it is extremely hard to detach the language from the culture.

However, one could argue that, perhaps, giving a proper name to ELF instead of referring to it as a kind of English (something that is immediately perceived as “not the real thing”) could help the detachment of ELF from Anglo-American culture. If that ever happens, it would not be the first time: Ebonics, for example, have attained some degree of recognition just by receiving a name.

What will happen in the future is difficult to predict, but unless
there are world shaking events and massive, global social revolutions, English will still be the global language, whether it is recognized or not.

I suspect that, as the horizons of international and intercultural communication have widened, the scale of the map has been moved back to a lesser zoom: we are on the brink of a global society, a true “global village”, where ELF is to EMT and to the other national languages what EMT is to the various English dialects, and Italian is to the various Italian dialects. Just as dialects have not disappeared through the adoption of a national language, because the former were concerned with identity and the latter with intra-national intelligibility, there is no reason to fear anything different would happen with ELF. It would just occur on a larger scale. It really is nothing new – it is simply a matter of taking a step back and seeing the big picture.

Then, new questions will present themselves to the academics. What will the global language be called? Will it be possible to devise a way of teaching this global language without going against the very nature of ELF? If another language ever supplants ELF as a global lingua franca, will it see similar developments?

I leave these questions, and any others that may arise, to the researchers of tomorrow.
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